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THE RATAN TATA FOUNDATION  
(UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)

THE  
FEEDING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN



THE RATAN TATA FOUNDATION  
(UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)

THE  
FEEDING OF SCHOOL  
CHILDREN

BY  
M. E. BULKLEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY  
R. H. TAWNEY  
DIRECTOR OF THE RATAN TATA FOUNDATION



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## PREFACE

IN the collection of the material on which the following pages are based I have received assistance from so many persons that it is impossible to thank them all individually. I gratefully acknowledge the unfailing courtesy of officials of Local Education Authorities, School Medical Officers, secretaries of Care Committees and many others, who have always been most ready to supply me with information as to the working of the Provision of Meals Act, and to show me the Feeding Centres. My thanks are due especially to the students of the Social Science Department of the School of Economics, who have assisted in collecting and arranging the material, especially to Miss Ruth Giles, Miss A. L. Hargrove, and Miss P. M. Bisgood, the first chapter being very largely the work of Miss Giles ; Mrs. Leslie Mackenzie, Mr. I. H. Cunningham, Miss Cecil Young and Mrs. F. H. Spencer have also kindly collected local information. I am greatly indebted to Mr. R. H. Tawney for much valuable advice and co-operation, and to Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb and Dr. Kerr for reading through the proofs. I should add that the enquiry was made during the course of the year 1913 and the account of the provision made refers to that date.

M. E. BULKLEY.





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## INTRODUCTION

THE Provision of Meals for School Children, which is the subject of the following pages, is still undergoing that process of tentative transformation from a private charity to a public service by which we are accustomed to disguise the assumption of new responsibilities by the State. Begun in the 'sixties of the nineteenth century as a form of philanthropic effort, and denounced from time to time as socialistic and subversive of family life, it first attracted serious public attention when the South African war made the physical defects caused by starvation, which had been regarded with tolerance in citizens, appear intolerable in soldiers, and was canvassed at some length in the well-known reports of the Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland and of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. The first disposition of the authorities was, as usual, to recur to that maid-of-all-work, the Poor Law, and in April, 1905, the Relief (School Children) Order empowered the Guardians to grant relief to the child of an able-bodied man without requiring him to enter the workhouse or to perform the outdoor labour test, provided that they took steps to recover the cost. The Guardians, however, perhaps happily, had little sympathy for this deviation from the principle of deterrence, with the result that the new Order was in most places either not applied or applied with insignificant results. The consequence was that the attempt to make the provision of meals for school children part of the Poor Law was

abandoned. In 1906 the Education (Provision of Meals) Act was passed empowering Local Education Authorities to provide food, either in co-operation with voluntary agencies or out of public funds, up to the limit of a half-penny rate. In the year 1911-12, out of 322 authorities, 131 were returned as making some provision for the feeding of school children.

The object of Miss Bulkley's monograph is to describe what that provision is, how adequate or inadequate, how systematic or haphazard, and to examine its effect on the welfare both of the children concerned, and of the general community. The present work is, therefore, complementary to Mr. Greenwood's *Health and Physique of School Children*, which was recently published by the Ratan Tata Foundation, and which gave an exhaustive description of the conditions of school children in respect of health as revealed by the reports of School Medical Officers. That the subject with which Miss Bulkley deals is one of the first importance, few, whatever views may be held as to the Act of 1906, will be found to deny. Almost all the medical authorities who have made a study of the health and physique of school children are unanimous that a capital cause of ill-health among them is lack of the right kind of food. "Defective nutrition," states Sir George Newman, "stands in the forefront as the most important of all physical defects from which school children suffer. . . . From a purely scientific point of view, if there was one thing he was allowed to do for the six million children if he wanted to rear an imperial race, it would be to feed them. . . . The great, urgent, pressing need was nutrition. With that they could get better brains and a better race." "Apart from infectious diseases," said Dr. Collie before the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, "malnutrition is accountable

for nine-tenths of child sickness." "Food," Dr. Eichholz told the same body, "is at the base of all the evils of child degeneracy." "The sufficient feeding of children," declared Dr. Niven, the Medical Officer of Health for Manchester, "is by far the most important thing to attend to." "To educate underfed children," said Dr. Leslie Mackenzie, "is to promote deterioration of physique by exhausting the nervous system. Education of the underfed is a positive evil." What doctors understand by malnutrition is what the plain man calls starvation; and while it is, of course, due to other causes besides actual inability to procure sufficient food, the experience of those authorities which have undertaken the provision of meals in a thorough and systematic manner suggests that these statements as to the prevalence of malnutrition or starvation are by no means exaggerations. To say, as has recently been said by a writer of repute in the *Economic Journal*, "already 40,000 children are fed weekly at the schools without appreciably improving the situation," is a ridiculous misstatement of the facts. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that in those areas where suitable and sufficient meals have been provided, there has been a marked improvement in the health of the children receiving them. The tentative conclusions on this point given for a single city by Mr. Greenwood (*Health and Physique of School Children*, pp. 62-67), are substantiated by the fuller evidence which Miss Bulkley sets out in Chapter V. of the present work. "As far as the children are concerned, indeed, whether we consider the improvement in physique, mental capacity or manners, there is no doubt that the provision of school meals has proved of the greatest benefit."

But while there is little doubt that the authorities which have made determined attempts to use to the full

their powers under the Act of 1906 have been rewarded by an improvement in the health of the children attending school, Miss Bulkley's enquiries show that the Act itself is open to criticism, that many local authorities who ought to have welcomed the new powers conferred by the Act have been deterred by a mean and short-sighted parsimony from adopting it, and that in many areas where it has been adopted its administration leaves much to be desired. The limitation to a halfpenny rate of the amount which a local authority may spend, has resulted in more than one authority stopping meals in spite of the existence of urgent need for them. By deciding—contrary, it would appear, to the intention of Parliament—that local authorities cannot legally spend money on providing meals except when the children are actually in school, the Local Government Board has made impossible, except at the risk of a surcharge or at the cost of private charity, the provision of meals during holidays. To those who regard the whole policy of the Act of 1906 as a mistake, these limitations upon it will appear, of course, to be an advantage. But the assumption on which the Act is based is that it is in the public interest that provision should be made for children who would otherwise be underfed, and, granted this premise, the wisdom of intervening to protect ratepayers against their own too logical deductions from it would appear to be as questionable as it is unnecessary. The bad precedent of authorities such as Leicester, which has refused to adopt the Act, and which leaves the feeding of school children to be carried out by a voluntary organisation under whose management the application for meals is in effect discouraged, does not, unfortunately, stand alone. Of more than 200 authorities who have made no use of their statutory powers, how many are justified in their inaction by the absence of distress among

the school children in their area? How many have even taken steps to ascertain whether such distress exists or not? If it is the case, as is stated by high medical authorities, that "the education of the underfed is a positive evil," would not the natural corollary appear to be that, now that the experimental stage has been passed, the Act should be made obligatory and the provision of meals should become a normal part of the school curriculum?

Apart from these larger questions of policy, it will be agreed that, if local authorities are to feed children at all, it is desirable that they should do so in the way calculated to produce the beneficial results upon the health of school children which it is the object of the Act to secure. That certain authorities have been strikingly successful in providing good food under humanising conditions appears from the account of the effects of school meals given by Miss Bulkley. But the methods pursued in the selection of the children and in the arrangements made for feeding them vary infinitely from place to place, and the standards of efficiency with which many authorities are content appear to be lamentably low. It is evident that in many places a large number of children who need food are overlooked, either because the conditions are such as to deter parents from applying for meals, or because no attempt is made to use the medical service to discover the needs of children whose parents have not applied, or for both reasons (pp. 59-75). It is evident also that many authorities do not give sufficient attention to the character of the meals provided (pp. 79-83), or to the conditions under which they are served (pp. 83-101), with the result that "most diets . . . are probably wanting in value for the children," and that little attempt is made to secure the "directly educational effect . . .



in respect of manners and conduct," which was emphasised as a *desideratum* by the Board of Education. London, in particular, where the necessity for the provision of meals is conspicuous, has won a bad pre-eminence by sinning against light. Reluctant, in the first place, to use its powers at all—"the whole question," said the chairman of the Sub-Committee on Underfed Children in 1908, "of deciding which children are underfed, and of making special provision for such children, should really be one for the Poor Law Authority"—the Education Committee of the London County Council has taken little pains to ensure that the food provided should always be suitable, or that the meals should be served under civilising conditions. That these defects can be removed by care and forethought is shown by the example set by such towns as Bradford, and now that eight years have elapsed since the Education (Provision of Meals) Act was passed, they should cease to receive the toleration which may reasonably be extended to new experiments. Miss Bulkley's monograph will have served its purpose if it makes it somewhat easier for the administrator, whether on Education Authorities or Care Committees, in Public Offices or in Parliament itself, to apply the varied experience of the last eight years to a problem whose solution is an indispensable condition of the progress of elementary education.

R. H. TAWNEY.

# THE FEEDING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT FOR THE PROVISION OF SCHOOL MEALS

THE latter half of the nineteenth century was remarkable for the birth of a new social conscience manifesting itself in every kind of social movement. Some were mere outbursts of sentimentality, pauperising and patronising, others indicated real care and sympathy for the weaker members of society, others again a love of scientific method and order. Thus in the early 'sixties there was an enormous growth in the amount spent in charity, leading to hopeless confusion. An attempt to introduce some order into this chaos and to stem the tide of indiscriminate almsgiving was made in 1868 by the formation of the "Society for the Prevention of Pauperism and Crime," which split the following year into the Industrial Employment Association and the better known Charity Organisation Society. In the 'eighties "slumming" became a fashionable occupation, while 1884 saw the beginning of the Settlement movement in the foundation of Toynbee Hall. Meanwhile the working classes were becoming articulate, learning more self-reliance and mutual dependence. The growth of Trade Unions, of Co-operative and Friendly societies, showed how the working people were beginning to work out their own salvation. Towards the close of the century methods of

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improvement were nearly all on collectivist lines—in sanitary reform, in free education, in the agitation for a legal limitation of labour to eight hours a day, for a minimum wage and for Old Age Pensions.

Amongst the most characteristic of these activities was the movement for the feeding of poor school children. In the early years of the movement the motives were chiefly philanthropic. The establishment of the Ragged and other schools had brought under the notice of teachers and others large numbers of children, underfed and ill-clothed. Still more was this the case when education was made compulsory under the Education Act of 1870. It was impossible for humanitarians to attempt to educate these children without at the same time trying to alleviate their distress. Education, in fact, proved useless if the child was starving; more, it might be positively detrimental, since the effort to learn placed on the child's brain a task greater than it could bear. All these early endeavours to provide meals were undertaken by voluntary agencies. Their operations were spasmodic and proved totally inadequate to cope with the evil. Towards the end of the century we find a growing insistence on the doctrine that it was the duty of the State to ensure that the children for whom it provided education should not be incapable, through lack of food, of profiting by that education. On the one hand some socialists demanded that the State ought itself to provide food for all its elementary school children. Another school of reformers urged that voluntary agencies might in many areas deal with the question, but that where their resources proved inadequate the State must step in and supplement them. Others again objected to any public provision of meals on the ground that it would undermine parental responsibility. The demand that the State must take some action was strengthened by the alarm excited during the South

African war by the difficulty experienced in securing recruits of the requisite physique. The importance of the physical condition of the masses of the population was thus forced upon public attention. It was urged that the child was the material for the future generation, and that a healthy race could not be reared if the children were chronically underfed. In the result Parliament yielded to the popular demand, and by the Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906 gave power to the Local Education Authorities to assist voluntary agencies in the work of providing meals, and if necessary themselves to provide food out of the rates.

(a)—*Provision by Voluntary Agencies.*

The first experiments in the provision of free or cheap dinners for school children appear to date from the early 'sixties.<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest and most important of the London societies was the Destitute Children's Dinner Society, founded in February, 1864, in connection with a Ragged School in Westminster.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Many of our own [Roman Catholic] schools . . . fed the children even in the 'sixties." (Report of Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Evidence of Monsignor Brown, Q. 1038.)

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the impulse for the formation of this society came indirectly from France. In 1848 a commission of medical and scientific men had been appointed by the French Government to enquire into the causes of diseases, such as scrofula, rickets, and impoverishment of blood, to which children of the poor were exposed, and which produced so much mortality. The Committee reported that in their opinion the diseases were caused by children not having animal food, and might be checked by their having a meal of fresh meat once a month. Owing to political events no action was taken on this report, but it made a great impression on Victor Hugo, and some fourteen years later (in 1862) he started the experiment of giving dinners of fresh meat and a small glass of wine, once a fortnight, to forty of the most necessitous young children of Guernsey. This experiment was declared to be very successful. Many children suffering from the above diseases had been cured, "and the physical constitution of nearly the whole of them sensibly

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This Society quickly grew and, between October 1869 and April 1870, fifty-eight dining rooms were opened for longer or shorter periods.<sup>1</sup> The motive, though largely sentimental, was from the first supported by educational considerations. "Their almost constant destitution of food," write the Committee in their appeal for funds, "is not only laying the foundation of permanent disease in their debilitated constitutions, but reduces them to so low a state that they have not vigour of body or energy of mind sufficient to derive any profit from the exertions of their teachers."<sup>2</sup> The influence of the newly-formed Charity Organisation Society is seen in the nervous anxiety of the promoters to avoid the charge of pauperising. "Our object is not the indiscriminate relief of the multitude of poor children to be found in the lowest parts of the metropolis. Our efforts are limited to those in attendance at ragged or other schools so as to encourage and assist the moral and religious training thus afforded."<sup>3</sup> The dinners were not self-supporting,<sup>4</sup> but a great point was made of the fact that a penny was charged towards paying the cost. Nevertheless the promoters admitted that "it

improved" (*Punch*, January 16, 1864). This description concluded with a suggestion that a similar scheme might be initiated in London. The Destitute Children's Dinner Society was the result. (*Charity Organisation Review*, January, 1885, p. 23.)

<sup>1</sup> Report on Metropolitan Soup Kitchens and Dinner Tables, by the Society for Organising Charitable Relief, 1871, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, December 5, 1867.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1, 1870. The following year the Charity Organisation Society reports approvingly that the Destitute Children's Dinner Society "cordially accepts and endeavours to act up to the principle that 'to relieve destitution belongs to the Poor Law, while to prevent destitution is the peculiar function of charity.'" (Report on Metropolitan Soup Kitchens and Dinner Tables, 1871, p. 57.)

<sup>4</sup> The cost of a meal was generally 4d., 5d. or 6d.

has been found impossible in some localities to obtain any payment from the children.”<sup>1</sup>

The methods adopted by other societies were very similar. A common feature of all was the infrequency of the meal. As a rule a child would receive a dinner once a week, at the most twice a week.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the dinners, unlike those supplied at the end of the century, when the predominant feature was soup, seem always to have been substantial and to have consisted of hot meat.<sup>3</sup> But making all allowance for the nutritive value of the meal, its infrequency prevents us from placing much confidence in the enthusiastic reports of the various societies as to the beneficial result upon the children. “Experience has proved,” writes the Destitute Children’s Dinner Society in 1867, “that one substantial meat dinner per week has a marked effect on the health and powers of the children.”<sup>4</sup> “Not only is there a marked improvement in their physical condition,” reports the same society two years later, “but their teachers affirm that they are now enabled to exert their mental powers in a degree which was formerly impossible.”<sup>5</sup> The Ragged School Union in 1870 reports to the same effect. “The physical benefit of these dinners to the children is great; but it is not the body only that is benefited; the teachers agree in their

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, April 15, 1868.

<sup>2</sup> We have only found one case where the dinner was given as often as three times a week. (See letter from John Palmer, Hon. Sec. of the Clare Market Ragged Schools, *ibid.*, October 16, 1871.)

<sup>3</sup> Thus a dinner given by the Refuge for Homeless and Destitute Children to pupils of St. Giles and St. George, Bloomsbury, consisted of boiled and roast beef, plenty of potatoes, and a thick slice of bread, the portion given to each child being abundant. (*Ibid.*, November 27, 1869.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, March 26, 1869.

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opinion that those who are thus fed become more docile and teachable.”<sup>1</sup>

Meals were given only during the winter, though one society at any rate, the Destitute Children's Dinner Society, realised the importance of continuing the work throughout the year—an importance even now not universally appreciated—their object being “not to relieve temporary distress only, but by an additional weekly meal of good quality and quantity, to improve the general health and moral condition of the half starved and neglected children who swarm throughout the poor districts of London.”<sup>2</sup> Funds apparently did not permit of their achieving this object.<sup>3</sup>

After the passing of the Education Act of 1870, educational considerations became the dominant motive for feeding. Teachers and school managers as well as philanthropists found themselves increasingly compelled to deal with the problem. It was not only that compulsory education brought into notice hundreds of needy children who had before been hidden away in courts and back alleys,<sup>4</sup> but the effect of education on a starving child proved useless.

The *Referee* Fund, started in 1874, was the result of Mrs. Burgwin's experience when head teacher of Orange Street School, Southwark. She found the children in

<sup>1</sup> Report of Ragged School Union for 1870, quoted in Report on Metropolitan Soup Kitchens and Dinner Tables, 1871, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from the Treasurer of the Destitute Children's Dinner Society, *The Times*, April 15, 1868.

<sup>3</sup> In that year (1868) dinners were given during nine months, being discontinued only from July to September, but in subsequent years they appear to have been provided during the winter months only.

<sup>4</sup> “At the present season, when the energy of the School Board visitors is filling the schools with all the poorest of the poor street Arabs, the need of such a society as this is more than ever felt.” (Letter from the Committee of the Destitute Children's Dinner Society, *The Times*, December 12, 1872.)

a deplorable condition and on appealing to a medical man for advice was told that they were simply starving. With the help of her assistant teachers she provided tea, coffee or warm milk for the most needy. Soon a small local organisation was started, and a year or two after Mr. G. R. Sims drew public attention to the question by his articles on "How the Poor Live," and appealed for funds through the *Referee*.<sup>1</sup> The operations of the fund thus established were at first confined to West Southwark—"in that area," Mrs. Burgwin triumphantly declared, "there was not a hungry school child"<sup>2</sup>—but were gradually extended to other districts. As a result of the meals thus provided it was said that the children looked healthier and attended school better in the winter when they were being fed than they did in the summer.<sup>3</sup>

The standard example, however, constantly quoted as evidence of the value of school meals, was the experiment started by Sir Henry Peek at Rousdon in 1876. The children in that district had to walk long distances to school, "bringing with them wretched morsels of food for dinner," with, naturally, most unsatisfactory results. Sir Henry Peek provided one good meal a day for five days, charging one penny a day. The system was practically self-supporting. The experiment was declared by the Inspector to have "turned out a very great success. What strikes one at once on coming into the school is the healthy vigorous look of the children, and that their vigour is not merely bodily, but comes out in the course of examination. There is a marked contrast between

<sup>1</sup> London School Board, Report of Special Committee on Underfed Children, 1895, Appendix 1, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Vol. II., Q. 304.

<sup>3</sup> London School Board, Report of Special Committee on Underfed Children, 1895, Appendix 1, p. 6.



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their appearance and their work on the day of inspection, and those of the children in many of the neighbouring schools. The midday meal is good and without stint. It acts as an attraction, and induces regularity of attendance. . . . Before the school was started the education of the children of the neighbourhood was as low as in any part of the district.”<sup>1</sup>

About 1880 another motive for school meals emerges. Public opinion began to be aroused on the subject of over-pressure. It was said that far too many subjects were taught and that the system of “payment by results” forced the teachers to overwork the children for the sake of the grant. It was pointed out that not only was it useless to try to educate a starving child, but the results might be positively harmful. Numerous letters from school managers, doctors and others appeared in *The Times*. “In dispensary practice,” writes Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake, “I have lately seen several cases of habitual headache and other cerebral affections among children of all ages attending our Board Schools, and have traced their origin to overstrain caused by the ordinary school work, which the ill-nourished physical frames are often quite unfit to bear. I have spoken repeatedly on the subject to members of the School Boards, and also to teachers in the schools, and have again and again been

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Mundella in the House of Commons, *Hansard*, July 26, 1883, 3rd Series, Vol. 282, pp. 577-9. “The effect on the health of the children,” writes the Rector of Rousdon in January, 1885, “may be well exemplified by the most recent illustration—viz., that in the third week of December, though whooping-cough had been, and still was, prevalent among them, and the weather was damp and raw, the entry on the master’s weekly report was, absentees, 0 — that is, *every* child on the register had appeared on the Monday morning and paid for its week’s dinners. Probably such a circumstance in a rural school district (with radius of a mile and a half at least) in the height of winter is unprecedented.” (*Sanitary Record*, January 15, 1885.)

assured by them that they were quite alive to the danger, and heartily wished that it was in their power to avert it, but that the constantly advancing requirements of the Education Code left them no option in the matter.”<sup>1</sup>

*The Lancet* spoke strongly on the subject<sup>2</sup> and in 1883 it was hotly discussed in Parliament. Mr. Mundella spoke in warm praise of Sir Henry Peek’s experiment, while Mr. S. Smith, the member for Liverpool, went so far as to say that “if Parliament compelled persons by force of law to send their children to school, and the little ones were to be forced to undergo such a grinding system, they ought not to injure them in so doing, but should provide them, in cases of proved necessity, with sufficient nourishment to enable them to stand the pressure.”<sup>3</sup> Such a proposition sounds “advanced” for the year 1883, but he added the still more modern

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, April 15, 1880. Speaking of the children at London Hospitals, Dr. Robert Farquharson writes: “Ill-fed and badly housed and clothed, exposed to depressing sanitary and domestic conditions, these poor creatures are frequently expected to do an amount of school work of which their badly-nourished brains are utterly incapable. I have long been familiar with the pale, dejected look, the chronic headache, the sleeplessness, the loss of appetite, the general want of tone, caused undoubtedly by the undue exercise of nervous tissues unprovided with their proper allowance of healthy food.” Such children “are by no means inclined to shirk their lessons; they are frequently much interested in them; but, feeling the responsibility of class and examinations keenly . . . they become sleepless and restless, and rapidly lose flesh and strength.” (*Ibid.*, April 19, 1880.)

<sup>2</sup> “That good feeding is necessary for brain nutrition does not need to be demonstrated or even argued at length . . . it must be evident that the position in which education places the brains of underfed children is that of a highly-exercised organ urgently requiring food, and finding none or very little. These children are *growing*, and all or nearly all the food they can get is appropriated by the grosser and bulkier parts of the body to the starvation of the brain. . . . It is cruel to educate a growing child unless you are also prepared to feed him.” (Leading Article, *The Lancet*, August 4, 1883, Vol. II., pp. 191-2.)

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, July 26, 1883, 3rd Series, Vol. 282, p. 597.

suggestion—"that not only should we have a medical inspection of schools, but that the grants should be partly dependent upon the physical health of the children. . . . We were applying sanitary science to our great towns, and we should apply the same science also to the educational system of the country." <sup>1</sup> At last Mr. Mundella instigated Dr. Crichton Browne to undertake a private enquiry into the subject. The report was somewhat vague and rhetorical, and Dr. Browne's judgments were said to be based on insufficient data, so that little fresh light was thrown on the question. It is, however, noteworthy that he too recommended medical inspection and also that a record of the height, weight and chest girth of the children should be kept.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of conflicting opinions, one point became increasingly clear. Whether the amount of mental strain necessitated by the Educational Code was exaggerated or not, there was no doubt that good educational results were dependent upon health and could not be attained where the children were seriously underfed. The situation was summed up by Mr. Sydney Buxton during a conference of Managers and Teachers of London Board Schools in 1884. The School Boards, he said, had by their compulsory powers been "year by year tapping a lower stratum of society, bringing to light the distress, destitution and underfeeding which formerly had escaped their notice. The cry of over-pressure had drawn public attention to the children attending elementary schools, and he thought it was now becoming more and more recognised that 'over-pressure' in a very large number of cases was only another word for 'under-feeding.' " <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, September 16, 1884.

*School Board Chronicle*, December 13, 1884, pp. 628-9.

The principle that compulsory education involved some provision of food being thus generally admitted,<sup>1</sup> the question remained how was this to be done? Should the meals be provided free or should they be self-supporting? A keen controversy ensued as to the merits of penny dinners. *The Times* quoted with apparent astonishment and alarm the view of the Minister of Education that it would not be enough to provide meals for those who could pay for them, and that whatever might be the vices of the parents the children ought not to suffer.<sup>2</sup> The Charity Organisation Society held more than one conference on the subject and emphatically contended that the only means of avoiding "pauperisation" was to insist on payment for the meals. Indeed some members felt so strongly that penny dinners were bound to be converted into halfpenny or free dinners, that they were reluctant to give the movement any support at all.<sup>3</sup> The attitude of the society was, as *The Times* said, "one of watchful criticism."<sup>4</sup> Yet there were some, at any rate, who recognised that the obligation on the part of the parent to send his children to school involved a very real pecuniary sacrifice which might often more than counterbalance any advantage to be obtained from free meals. "We must not teach poor children or poor parents to lean upon charity," says the School Board Chronicle in 1884. "But, on the other hand, it ought never to be forgotten that this new law of compulsory attendance at school, in the making whereof the poorest

<sup>1</sup> "It is now admitted that children cannot be expected to learn their lessons unless they are properly fed." (*The Times*, Leading Article, December 13, 1884.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Charity Organisation Review*, January, 1885, p. 25. As we shall see (post, p. 19), their fears in this respect were realised.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, Leading Article, January 20, 1885.

classes of the people had no hand whatever, exacts greater sacrifices from that class than from any other. We hear a good deal sometimes . . . of the grumbling of the ratepayers . . . as to the burden of the school rate . . . But do these grumblers ever reflect that the very poor of whom we are speaking never asked to have education provided for their children, never wanted it, have practically nothing to gain by it and much to lose, and that this law of compulsory education is forced on them, not for their good or for their pleasure, but for the safety and progress of society and for the sake of economy in the administration of the laws in the matter of poor relief and crime." <sup>1</sup> Amidst all the discussion on the needs and morals of the poor from the standpoint of the superior person, it is refreshing to find so honest and sympathetic a criticism.

The outcome of this lengthy public discussion was a great increase in voluntary feeding agencies all over the country about the year 1884.<sup>2</sup> At the Conference of Board School Managers and Teachers in that year, Mr. Mundella stated that, since he referred in the House of Commons to the Rousdon experiment, provision for school meals was being made in rural districts to an extent which he could hardly believe.<sup>3</sup> In London the Council for Promoting Self-supporting Penny Dinners was established and the movement spread rapidly. In August, 1884, there were only two centres where penny dinners on a self-supporting basis were provided. By December such dinners had been started in thirteen other districts.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile the promoters of free meals continued their

<sup>1</sup> *The School Board Chronicle*, December 13, 1884, p. 627.

<sup>2</sup> Such voluntary agencies were established, for instance, at Hastings (about 1882), at Birmingham and Gateshead (in 1884), at Carlisle (in 1889).

<sup>3</sup> *School Board Chronicle*, December 13, 1884, pp. 629-630.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 628.

work unabashed. The Board School Children's Free Dinner Fund declared in 1885, "our work does not cross the lines of the penny dinner movement. It was started before that movement and has been in some cases carried on side by side with it, its object being to feed those children whose parents have neither pennies nor half-pennies to pay for their dinners. Free dinners are restricted to the children of widows, and to those whose parents are ill or out of work."<sup>1</sup> The *Referee* Fund now supplied schools over a large part of South London and had always given free meals. In most provincial towns, whether the dinners were nominally self-supporting or not, necessitous children were seldom refused food on account of inability to pay. Private philanthropists saw the suffering and tried to alleviate it, not enquiring too closely into the consequences.

It was generally taken for granted that the meals, whether free or self-supporting, should be provided by voluntary agencies. The Local Education Authorities sometimes granted the use of rooms and plant,<sup>2</sup> but

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, December 16, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Thus at Liverpool, about 1885, the Council of Education resolved to offer grants to School Managers for the supply of needful appliances for penny dinners, provided that "the payment of a penny should absolutely cover the cost of each dinner, so as not only to avoid pauperising the recipient, but also to render the scheme entirely self-supporting." (Report of Special Sub-Committee on Meals for School Children, in Minutes of London School Board, July 25, 1889, p. 383.) At Birmingham the School Board allowed a voluntary committee to erect kitchens on the school premises. (London School Board, Report of General Purposes Committee on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, p. 253.) At Gateshead, in 1884, the School Board arranged for a supply of dinners in the schools in the poorest parts of the town. (Report of Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Q. 4101.) In London, the School Board in 1885 resolved "that the Board grant facilities to local managers and to other responsible persons for the provision on the school

seldom took any further action. It is remarkable that the Guardians, whose duty it was to relieve the destitution existing, seem to have paid but the scantiest attention to it. Even where they attempted to deal with it by granting relief to the family, this relief was generally inadequate and the children were consequently underfed, with the result that they were given meals by the voluntary feeding agencies.<sup>1</sup> There seems indeed to have been no co-operation whatever between the various voluntary agencies established all over the country and the Boards of Guardians.<sup>2</sup> By an Act of Parliament passed in 1868 it was enacted that where any parent wilfully neglected to provide adequate food for his child the Board of Guardians should institute proceedings.<sup>3</sup> This Act seems to have remained almost a dead letter. In giving evidence before the House of Lords Select Committee on Poor Law Relief in 1888, Mr. Benjamin Waugh, Director of the National Society for the Preven-

premises of penny dinners on self-supporting principles for elementary school children, where it can be done without interference with school work or injury to the school buildings." (Report of Special Committee on Meals for School Children, in Minutes of London School Board, July 25, 1889, p. 374.) At Manchester, as early as 1879, the School Board initiated a scheme for providing meals. The chairman, Mr. Herbert Birley, had been in the habit of supplying breakfasts to poor children in some of the schools, and on these schools being transferred to the School Board, he induced it to continue the work. (Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Vol. II., Qs. 2745A, 2754, evidence of Mr. C. H. Wyatt.)

<sup>1</sup> In Manchester there had been a serious attempt to meet the difficulty. There the Board of Guardians maintained a "Day Feeding School" and gave three meals a day to its out-door relief children for some years between 1856 and 1866. (Report of Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, 8vo Edition, Vol. III., p. 148 n.)

<sup>2</sup> See for instance the evidence given before the London School Board in 1895. (See post, p. 17.)

<sup>3</sup> 31 and 32 Vict. c. 122, sec. 37.

tion of Cruelty to Children, in speaking of the Act, stated, "first, that the Guardians do not act upon it to any very great extent; secondly, that the police know that it is not their business, and they do not act upon it; and, thirdly, the public have an impression that they are excluded from taking cognisance of starvation cases because the term used is 'the Guardians shall' do it." "There are cases in which they are habitually doing it, chiefly where ladies are upon the board, but in a very small number of cases indeed throughout the country."<sup>1</sup> The part taken by the State in the matter of relieving the wants of underfed children was thus as yet a small one.<sup>2</sup>

(b)—*The Organisation of the Voluntary Agencies.*

The history of the movement for the next ten years or so is mainly concerned with organisation. In London, with the number of feeding centres growing so rapidly, with many different agencies whose principles and methods conflicted, some plan of organisation and co-operation was the crying need. In May, 1887, at the instigation of Sir Henry Peek, a committee, composed of representatives of the various voluntary societies,<sup>3</sup> was formed to consider in what ways co-operation was feasible. This Committee recommended that (i) self-supporting dinner centres should be opened in as many districts as

<sup>1</sup> House of Lords Select Committee on Poor Law Relief, 1888, Qs. 5857, 5858.

<sup>2</sup> By an Act of 1876, the Local Education Authority might establish Day Industrial Schools at which one or more meals were provided, towards the cost of which the parents should contribute. (39 and 40 Vict., c. 79, sec. 16.) Very few such schools were established. (See post, p. 119.)

<sup>3</sup> The Committee represented the Self-Supporting Penny Dinner Council, the Board School Children's Free Dinner Fund, the South London Schools Dinner Fund, Free Breakfasts and Dinners for the Poor Board School and other Children of Southwark (the *Referee* Fund) and the Poor Children's Aid Association.



possible in London, and the various societies for providing dinners for children should be invited to make use of them; (ii) free dinners to children attending public elementary schools should only be given on the recommendation of the head teacher; (iii) when free dinners were given a register should be kept of the circumstances of the family.<sup>1</sup>

This attempt cannot have been very effective, for when, at last, the London School Board took the matter in hand, feeding arrangements were as chaotic as ever. In 1889 a special committee was appointed to enquire into the whole question and report to the Board. The report shows that the supply of food was extraordinarily badly distributed. "In some districts there is an excess of charitable effort leading to a wasteful and demoralising distribution of dinners to children who are not in want, while in other places children are starving."<sup>2</sup> In most cases the provision was insufficient to feed all the indigent children every day, many getting a meal only once or twice a week.<sup>3</sup> Only a rough estimate of the number of necessitous children could be obtained, but it was calculated that 43,888 or 12·8 per cent. of the children attending schools of the Board were habitually in want of food, and of these less than half were provided for.<sup>4</sup> The Committee recommended that a central organisation should be formed "to work with the existing Associations with a view to a more economical and efficient system for the provision of cheap or free meals."<sup>5</sup> As a result the London Schools Dinner Association was founded. Most of the large societies were merged into this body,

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, November 16, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Special Sub-Committee on Meals for School Children, in Minutes of London School Board, July 25, 1889, p. 373.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

one or two retaining their separate organisation, but agreeing to work in harmony with it.<sup>1</sup>

Another committee appointed by the School Board in December, 1894, was just as emphatic as to the general inefficiency and want of uniformity. The work of giving charitable meals, they found, was still in the experimental stage, as was shown by the "extremely divergent views . . . both as to the nature and extent of the distress . . . and as to the efficiency of the methods employed in meeting it."<sup>2</sup> They were struck by "the apparent want of co-ordination between the various agencies which were dealing with distress in London" (*i.e.*, the Poor Law, the Labour Bureaux established by the London Vestries, etc.). "The local committees in connection with the schools seem to have had no knowledge whatsoever of what was being done by these other bodies, except in the few cases where more or less permanent out-door relief was being given, and where the children presented attendance cards to be filled up by their teachers."<sup>3</sup> "Our work," remarked one witness, "is carried on without paying heed to what may be done under the Poor Law Authorities."<sup>4</sup> Relief

<sup>1</sup> Seven members of the School Board were placed on the Executive Committee as a kind of informal representation, but in 1899 this number had dwindled to three. (London School Board, Report of General Purposes Committee on Underfed Children, 1899, pp. v.-vi.) There was "no direct touch" between the two bodies, "except the accidental circumstance that Members of the Board might be on the Committee" of the Association. (*Ibid.*, p. 6, evidence of Mr. T. A. Spalding.)

<sup>2</sup> London School Board, Report of Special Committee on Underfed Children, 1895, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11, evidence of Mr. W. H. Libby. "I am of opinion," said this witness, "that the children of parents who are in receipt of out-door relief are more in need of our help than others." (*Ibid.*) "In my experience," said Mrs. Burgwin, "the greatest distress was amongst the children of parents who were in receipt of out-door relief, and free meals should certainly be given to them, for

was "often given without any connection with the managers or teachers of Public Elementary Schools." In one instance tickets for meals "were distributed without enquiry at the door of a Music Hall . . . the proprietor of which had been one of the chief subscribers to the Fund."<sup>1</sup> In another case "tickets issued by an evening paper fund were sold over and over again by the people to whom they were given ; sold in the streets and in the public-houses."<sup>2</sup> Even when the arrangements were nominally controlled by the Education Authorities the methods of selection were haphazard and the provision often totally inadequate. A number of witnesses gave evidence of this. "It was found that one child of a family was given fourteen tickets during the season, whilst another child of the same family had only one or two."<sup>3</sup> "It might have been well to have taken one or two children in hand for the purpose of observations," remarked the head-master of a Stepney school, "but I remember one of my instructions was that the same child was not to be given a meal too often."<sup>4</sup> In one school the number of children needing a dinner on any day was ascertained by a show of hands. Each child was then called out before the teacher and asked about its parents' circumstances.<sup>5</sup> In another case the teachers merely asked the children in the morning which of them would not get any dinner at home that day.<sup>6</sup> Of course there were seldom enough tickets to go round.

the amount allowed as out-door relief is so small that a family is left practically on the verge of starvation." (*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30 (evidence of Mrs. Marion Leon, Manager of Vere Street School, Clare Market).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15 (evidence of Mr. J. Morgan).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21 (evidence of Mr. C. H. Heller, Headmaster of Sayer Street School, Walworth).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30 (evidence of Mrs. Marion Leon).

For the parents this haphazard method was most bewildering. "No arrangement is made with the parents as to whether or not a child will have a meal on any day . . . In many cases the parents hardly know whether the children are having a meal at school or not, as they constantly come home for something more."<sup>1</sup>

In 1889 the self-supporting meal was still regarded as the normal type although the number of free meals was on the increase. In 1895 the committee recognised that self-supporting penny dinners were a failure. Only 10 per cent. of the meals were paid for by the children.<sup>2</sup> This had one rather curious effect. The meals were much more uniform in type than in 1889, and this uniformity was distasteful if not harmful to the children. The chief reason was perhaps that the need to attract the children was not so great as when it was hoped to establish the meals on a self-supporting basis. Another reason was that the National Food Supply Association, which did most of the catering, desired to encourage the use of vegetable soup as well as to relieve distress.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41 (evidence of Miss L. P. Fowler).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii. Even when the dinners were paid for, the payment rarely covered the cost. The same want of success was reported in the provinces. At Birmingham the experiment of giving penny dinners failed completely, and the meals had to be given free. (Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, 1904, Qs. 13238, 13240, evidence of Dr. Airy.) "The experience of all workers in this movement testifies," says Canon Moore Ede, "that the poorest of all—those who are least well nourished—are scarcely touched by the penny dinners." ("Cheap Meals for Poor School Children," by Rev. W. Moore Ede, in *Report of Conference on Education under Healthy Conditions at Manchester*, 1885, p. 81.)

<sup>3</sup> London School Board, Report of Special Committee on Underfed Children, 1895, pp. iv., v. "Under the penny dinner system, we had to provide something to attract the children, as they would not come to the same meal every day and pay a penny for it; puddings and meat pies were provided and varied from day to day. Now they get soup." (*Ibid.*, Appendix I., p. 39.

Apart from the question of more efficient organisation, the recommendations of this committee were somewhat indefinite. They urged that, as a guide for future action, continuous records should be kept of all children fed.<sup>1</sup> On the adequacy of the existing voluntary organisations to cope with the distress the majority declined to commit themselves. The minority asserted emphatically that these charitable funds were amply sufficient. The Committee questioned how far the supply of food was the right way of dealing with distress. "Actual starvation," they said, "was undoubtedly at one time the chief evil to be feared by the poor. But now that rent in London is so high and food so cheap conditions have changed."<sup>2</sup> Other forms of help, they felt, were possibly more needed, *e.g.*, medical advice and clothing. Indeed, during the last sixty years there had been such an improvement in the economic conditions of the working classes as had not been known at any other period of history. Comparisons between conditions obtaining at the beginning and at the end of the nineteenth century are to some extent vitiated by the fact that the former was a period of extraordinary social misery. Nevertheless, the improvement is striking. Sir Robert Giffen, speaking on "The Progress of the Working Classes in the Last Half Century," in November, 1883, showed that, while the wages of working men "have advanced, most articles he consumes have rather diminished in price, the change in wheat being especially remarkable, and significant of a complete revolution in the conditions of the masses. The increased price in the case of one or two

evidence of Rev. R. Leach.) "The soup . . . supplied by the National Food Association varies so very little from day to day that it is natural for the children to grow tired of it." (*Ibid.*, p. 22, evidence of Mr. C. H. Heller.)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. v., viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vi.

articles—particularly meat and house rent—is insufficient to neutralise the general advantages which the workman has gained.”<sup>1</sup> By further statistics he showed “a decline in the rate of mortality, an increase of the consumption of articles in general use, an improvement in general education, a diminution of crime and pauperism, a vast increase in the number of depositors in savings banks, and other evidences of general well-being.”<sup>2</sup> Up to 1895 the cost of living steadily declined, and in that year real wages were higher than they had ever been before. This did not mean, as some urged, that Society might slacken any of its efforts to improve the condition of the poorer classes. Even from the most optimistic standpoint the improvement was far too small, and there was still a residuum whose deplorable condition demanded “something like a revolution for the better.”<sup>3</sup> But now that the more prosperous working men were consciously striving to improve their own position, the community, or the philanthropists among it, were more able to assist the submerged remainder. The history of school feeding illustrates how “one of the least noticed but most certain facts of social life is the fact that Society very seldom awakes to the existence of an evil while that evil is at its worst, but some time afterwards, when the evil is already in process of healing itself. . . . Society can seldom be induced to bother itself about any suffering, the removal of which requires really revolutionary treatment. It only becomes sensitive, sympathetic and eager for reform when reform is possible without too great an upheaval of its settled way of life.”<sup>4</sup> A higher

<sup>1</sup> *Economic Enquiries and Studies*, by Sir Robert Giffen, 1904, Vol. I., pp. 398-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 408.

<sup>4</sup> *A Philosophy of Social Progress*, by E. J. Urwick, 1912, pp. 88, 89.

standard of living was now required and the real question was whether feeding the school child was the right way to attain to it, or only a following of the line of least resistance. If it was a healthy movement, then clearly it was time to set about feeding in a more thorough fashion.

In 1898 a third attempt was made by the London School Board to deal with the question. It was referred to the General Purposes Committee to enquire into the number of underfed children and to consider "how far the present voluntary provision for school meals is, or is not, effectual."<sup>1</sup> The evidence given before the committee shows the prevalence of a state of affairs very similar to that of the earlier years. There is the same complaint about "the want of any general plan, the utter lack of uniformity . . . the absence (except in a few places) of any means of enquiring into doubtful cases, and above all the non-existence of any sort of machinery for securing that where want exists it shall be dealt with."<sup>2</sup> But the report and recommendations of the majority of the Special Committee show an astonishing advance on the views of the two former committees. The necessity for feeding was not now denied, they thought, "even by those . . . who are keenly anxious to prevent the undermining of prudence or self-help by ill-advised or unregulated generosity."<sup>3</sup> They were most emphatic as to the good effects on the children when the meals were nicely served in the schools under proper supervision, and they considered "that food provision and training at meals should in particular form part of the work of all Centres for Physically and

<sup>1</sup> London School Board, Report of General Purposes Committee on Underfed Children, 1899, p. ii., par. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vi., par. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii., pars. 11, 12.

Mentally Defective children, and that the Government grant should be calculated accordingly.”<sup>1</sup> One or two of the members of the committee and some of the witnesses urged that meals should be continued in the summer.<sup>2</sup> As to the effect on the parents, “it appears to the sub-committee . . . that its concern is with the well-being of the children, and even if it were the case that it was, in some way, better for the moral character of the parents to let the children starve, the sub-committee would not be prepared to advise that line of policy. The first duty of the community to the child . . . is to see that it has a proper chance as regards its equipment for life.”<sup>3</sup> “If they come to school underfed . . . it would seem to be the duty of those who have a care of the children to deal with it, and to see that the under-feeding ceases. It is, of course, obvious, in any case, that this, like all other social evils, may be gradually eliminated by the general improvement, moral and material, of the community. But apart from the fact that that is a slow process and that many generations of actual school children will come and go in the meantime, it is obvious that the prevention of underfeeding in school children (with its results of under-education and increasing malnutrition) is itself one of the potent means of forwarding the general improvement.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time the idea that school dinners pauperise the parents

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v., par. 25. “School dinners well managed may be made to have an admirable educative effect. . . . This makes me think that a proper part of the business of the School should be a common mid-day meal.” (Evidence of Mrs. Despard, *ibid.*, p. 3.) Mrs. Burgwin was of the same opinion. (*Ibid.*, p. 14.)

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the suggestions made by Mr. Whiteley (*ibid.*, p. ix.), and the evidence of Mrs. Burgwin and Mr. J. Morant (*ibid.*, pp. 14, 15).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iv., par. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iv., par. 17.



or destroy the sense of parental responsibility "appears to the sub-committee to be a mere theoretic fancy entirely unsupported by practical experience."<sup>1</sup> Parents who could feed their children and would not should "simply be summoned for 'cruelty.'"<sup>2</sup>

The majority of the committee declared themselves convinced "by the consideration of the subject, and by the special information now obtained from Paris and from other foreign countries,<sup>3</sup> that the whole question of the feeding and health of children compulsorily attending school requires to be dealt with as a matter of public concern."<sup>4</sup> They therefore recommended that a Central Committee should be formed, which should be authorised to call for reports and general assistance from the Board's staff, facilities being granted for the use of rooms at the schools for meals, and they made the following important statement of principle:—"It should be deemed to be part of the duty of any authority by law responsible for the compulsory attendance of children at school to ascertain what children, if any, come to school in a state unfit to get normal profit by the school work—whether by reason of underfeeding, physical disability or otherwise—and there should be the necessary inspection for that purpose; that where it is ascertained that children are sent to school 'underfed' . . . it should be part of the duty of the authority to see that they are provided, under proper conditions, with the necessary food;" that "the authority should co-operate in any existing or future voluntary efforts to that end," and that, "in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iv., par. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v., par. 21.

<sup>3</sup> For some account of the "Cantines Scolaires" of Paris, and the provision of meals in other foreign towns, see Appendix III.

<sup>4</sup> London School Board, Report of General Purposes Committee on Underfed Children, 1899, p. vii., par. 35.

so far as such voluntary efforts fail to cover the ground, the authority should have the power and the duty to supplement them." Where dinners were provided, it was desirable that they should be open to all children, and that the parents should pay for them, unless they were unable by misfortune to find the money, and that no distinction should be made between the paying and the non-paying children. If the underfed condition of the child was due to the culpable neglect of the parent, the Board should prosecute the parent, and, if the offence was persisted in, should have power to deal with the child under the Industrial Schools Acts.<sup>1</sup>

The Board rejected these proposals and acted on the more cautious recommendations of the minority, who were convinced that there was no necessity for any public authority to undertake the work, the voluntary associations being entirely capable of dealing effectively with the need, if they were properly organised. They considered, therefore, that the duties of the School Board should be confined to co-operation in the organisation of these associations.<sup>2</sup> This decision was hailed with relief by *The Times*, which rejoiced that "the attempt of the 'Fabian' School of Socialists, assisted by some philanthropic dupes, to capture the London School Board has been decisively repelled."<sup>3</sup>

As a matter of fact the Fabian Society seems as yet to have paid little attention to the question, and, in so far as these proposals had been due to socialist influence, the agitation had come from the Social Democratic Federation. This body had, since the early 'eighties, made the provision of a free meal for all children attending ele-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii. Minutes of the London School Board, November 30, 1899, Vol. 51, pp. 1868-72. The Majority Report was rejected by 27 votes to 12.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, December 1, 1899.

mentary schools one of the fundamental planks of its platform.<sup>1</sup> Several memorials were sent to the School Board,<sup>2</sup> urging that all children whose parents were unemployed should be fed and clothed out of the rates, but this proposal was too sweeping to meet with a favourable reception.

The recommendations, which were finally adopted in March, 1900, provided for the establishment of a permanent committee, to be known as the "Joint Committee on Underfed Children." This was composed partly of members of the School Board, partly of representatives of various other bodies. Sub-committees, consisting of managers, teachers, School Board visitors and one or more co-opted outsiders, were to be appointed in each Board School, or group of Schools, where the necessity for providing meals for underfed children was felt, and these sub-committees were to make all necessary arrangements for the provision of meals.<sup>3</sup> The functions of the Joint Committee were limited. It was to receive reports from the sub-committees, to draw their attention to any defect which might appear in the selection of the children or the arrangements made for providing relief, to give them assistance by placing them in communication with a source of supply so as to enable them to obtain the necessary funds, to communicate with the chief collecting agencies when there was reason to fear that the funds might not be sufficient, and "generally to keep the public informed of what is being done to provide relief for underfed children, and to stimulate public

<sup>1</sup> *Justice*, March 29, September 13 and 27, December 6, 1884.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the memorials presented in 1892, 1896, and 1899. (Minutes of the London School Board, November 17, 1892; February 20, 1896; December 7, 1899.)

<sup>3</sup> Similar committees had been in existence in several schools for some years.

interest in the work.”<sup>1</sup> How far this effort to meet the need was successful we shall relate in a subsequent chapter.<sup>2</sup>

(c)—*The Demand for State Provision.*

Soon after the beginning of the new century the agitation for some form of State feeding grew urgent and widespread. There was no attempt to deal with the matter in the Education Act of 1902, but from about this date onwards the question constantly recurred in Parliamentary debates, a sure indication that the question was interesting others besides the expert and the philanthropist. And to the old motives of sentiment and educational need was added a new motive, a motive specially characteristic of the present century and one which in some other directions threatens to become almost an obsession. This was the desire for “race regeneration,” the conviction of the supreme importance of securing a physically efficient people. Formerly the tendency had been to sacrifice the needs of the child to the supposed moral welfare of the family, now the child was regarded primarily as the raw material for a nation of healthy citizens.

The South African war had been partly instrumental in producing this extreme anxiety about physical unfitness, and two public enquiries—the Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland, and the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration—furnished abundant proof of the harm which was being done in this direction by the mal-nutrition of school children.

The report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training showed indisputably the necessity for better feeding. On this point a large number of important

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the London School Board, March 1, 1900, Vol. 52, pp. 854–5, 905.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter III.

witnesses were unanimous.<sup>1</sup> The Commissioners were, however, cautious in their recommendations. Though fully convinced of the necessity for feeding, they were doubtful as to how far the responsibility for dealing with the need should be placed upon the Education Authorities. "It is matter for grave consideration," they declared, "whether the valuable asset to the nation in the improved moral and physical state of a large number of future citizens counterbalances the evils of impaired parental responsibility, or whether voluntary agencies may be trusted to do this work with more discrimination and consequently less danger than a statutory system."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, they urged, "it must be remembered that, with every desire to act up to their parental responsibility, and while quite ready to contribute in proportion to their power, there are often impediments in the way of the home provision of suitable food by the parents."<sup>3</sup> They considered, therefore, that "accommodation and means for enabling children to be properly fed should . . . be provided either in each school or in a centre; but, except a limited sum to provide the necessary equipment, no part of the cost should be allowed to fall on the rates."<sup>4</sup> The meal should be educational in character. "An obligation for the proper supervision

<sup>1</sup> Report of Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland), 1903, Vol. I., p. 30, par. 162. "If we are going to develop the physical training of children we must be on our guard against overworking them," said one witness, "and, of course, underfed children would be positively injured by even light exercises." (*Ibid.*, Vol. II., Q. 760, evidence of Mr. J. E. Legge, Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools.) "Children can exist, when doing no mental or physical work, on a bare subsistence diet," said Dr. Clement Dukes, "but . . . a bare subsistence diet becomes a starvation diet when mental or bodily work is added." (*Ibid.*, Q. 8140.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 30, par. 165.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30, par. 167.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31, par. 172.

of the feeding of those who come for instruction should be regarded as one of the duties of school authorities.”<sup>1</sup>

The findings of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration were more definite and striking. To take first the evidence as to the extent of underfeeding, Dr. Eichholz, after careful investigation, estimated that the rough total of underfed children in London was 122,000 or 16 per cent. of the elementary school population. These figures were based on the assumption that all the children being fed at schools and centres would otherwise have gone unfed; but, considering the loose method of enquiry prevalent, this was questionable. The London School Board put the number at 10,000, but this seems to have been grossly understating the case.<sup>2</sup> In Manchester, according to the estimate of the Education Committee and the Medical Officer of Health, not less than 15 per cent. were underfed.<sup>3</sup> The evidence given was, however, conflicting, and indeed little reliance can be placed on these statistics.

With regard to the effect of underfeeding on the physique of the children, the doctors gave striking testimony. Dr. Robert Hutchison was of opinion that, if a child had not sufficient food during the period of growth, that is during the school years, it would be permanently stunted.<sup>4</sup> “Apart from infectious diseases,” said Dr.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30, par. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, 1904, p. 66, pars. 332-334; evidence of Dr. Eichholz, Qs. 471-476.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67, par. 335; evidence of Dr. Eichholz, Q. 476.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 9974. “The critical age,” he considered, was “from 10 to 15.” Looking at the enormous improvement in children in the Navy and in Industrial Schools, where they were properly fed, he did not “share the pessimistic view that the mischief is hopelessly done by the time a child reaches school age.” He felt certain that “the provision of meals would do a great deal to improve the health and growth and development

Collie of the London School Board, "malnutrition is accountable for nine-tenths of child sickness."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Eichholz pointed out that at Leeds Dr. Hall had found that fifty per cent. of the children in a poor school suffered from rickets, the true cause of which was poor and unsuitable food, whilst in a well-to-do school the proportion was only eight per cent.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of this witness, an opinion "shared by medical men, members of Education Committees, managers, teachers and others conversant with the condition of school children . . . food is at the base of all the evils of child degeneracy."<sup>3</sup> "The sufficient feeding of children," declared Dr. Niven, Medical Officer of Health for Manchester, "is by far the most important thing to attend to and . . . specially important in connection with the Army. . . . When trade is good," he argued, "you will have to rely for the Army upon this very poor class, and in order to get good soldiers you must rear good children, you must see that children are adequately fed."<sup>4</sup>

Such were the arguments on the negative side—on the positive side there was ample proof of the good effects of a regular nutritious diet. Dr. Eichholz referred to Dr. Hall's experiment in feeding poor children at Leeds. "Taking sixty poor seven-year-old children, at the beginning of the period they totalled 455 lbs., below normal weight. . . . They gained in three months forty lbs. in addition to the normal increase in weight" for that time, "and they looked less anæmic and more cheerful."<sup>5</sup>

of the children of the poorer classes." (*Ibid.*, Qs. 9973, 10047-8, 10051, 1006.)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 3992.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 452.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 475.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 6484. See also evidence of General Sir T. Maurice, Q. 278.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, evidence of Dr. Eichholz, Q. 486.

Too much importance must not be attached to these figures since the data on which they are based are not sufficiently known to gauge their value, but that the improvement was very considerable cannot be doubted. Moreover, in the special schools for mentally defective children where meals were regularly provided, the results were astonishing. Dr. Collie told how, "in a large number of instances after the careful individual attention and midday dinner of the special schools," the children "returned after from six to eighteen months to the elementary schools with a new lease of mental vigour. These children are functionally mentally defective. . . . Their brains are starved, and naturally fail to react to the ordinary methods of elementary teaching." <sup>1</sup> "Bad nutrition and normal brain development," he added, "are incompatible." <sup>2</sup>

There was indeed, as the Committee pointed out, "a general consensus of opinion that the time had come when the State should realise the necessity of ensuring adequate nourishment to children in attendance at school . . . it was, further, the subject of general agreement that, as a rule, no purely voluntary association could successfully cope with the full extent of the evil." <sup>3</sup> In a large number of cases such voluntary organisations would be sufficient for the purpose, "with the support and oversight of the Local Authority," and, as long as this was so, the Committee would "strongly deprecate recourse being had to direct municipal assistance." <sup>4</sup> But in cases where "the extent or the concentration of poverty might be too great for the resources of local charity . . . it might be expedient to permit the application of municipal aid on a larger scale." <sup>5</sup> As a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, evidence of Dr. Collie, Q. 3938.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 3973.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69, par. 348.      <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72, par. 359.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 362.



corollary to the exercise of such powers on the part of the Local Authority, the law would have to be altered to make it more possible to prosecute neglectful parents.<sup>1</sup> The Committee were also in favour of establishing special schools of the Day Industrial School type in which feeding would form an essential feature. To these definitely "retarded" children might be sent.<sup>2</sup> They recommended that the funds for these experiments should be found through the machinery of the Poor Law,<sup>3</sup> for they were anxious to guard the community from the consequences of "the somewhat dangerous doctrine that free meals are the necessary concomitant of free education."<sup>4</sup>

Following on these reports came a strenuous agitation in Parliament and in the country. The National Labour Conference on the State Maintenance of Children, held at the Guildhall in January, 1905, declared unanimously in favour of State Maintenance "as a necessary corollary of Universal Compulsory Education, and as a means of partially arresting that physical deterioration of the industrial population of this country, which is now generally recognised as a grave national danger. As a step towards such State Maintenance," the conference called upon the Government to introduce without further delay legislation enabling Local Authorities to provide meals for school children, the cost to be borne by the National Exchequer.<sup>5</sup> The National Union of Teachers, at a largely attended conference at Llandudno in the same year, were agreed as to the urgent need for legislation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 363.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 364.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 365.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the National Labour Conference on the State Maintenance of Children, at the Guildhall, January 20, 1905, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Report of Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Qs. 792, 924, 925. By a considerable majority the Conference defeated an amendment

In Parliament the agitation was led by Mr. Claude Hay, Sir John Gorst and Dr. Macnamara. It was urged that a large part of the money spent on education was wasted. To teach children who were physically quite unfit to receive instruction, was, as Sir John Gorst pointed out, "the height of absurdity."<sup>1</sup> Thirty years' compulsory education had, Mr. Claude Hay declared, resulted in disappointment. "The gain in intelligence was, to say the least of it, equivocal, while the physical deterioration of the people was obvious. The reason was largely that we had taken education as an isolated factor, whereas it was part of an absolutely indivisible unit . . . We had assumed that . . . the intellect could act independently of all other parts of the total human being. We had ignored the body, the soul and the will, and the result had been a fiasco."<sup>2</sup> Compulsory education involved free meals, but only for the "necessitous child."<sup>3</sup> It was declared that many parents would gladly pay if they were thereby assured that their children were adequately and properly fed.<sup>4</sup>

For some time the Government remained obdurate, and declined to take any action. At last, however, it became clear that something must be done. The findings of the Royal Commission on Physical Training and the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration had

that the Board of Guardians should be substituted for the Local Education Authority as the authority for making the provision, but owing to a technical difficulty the main resolution was not put. See also the resolution passed at a conference of the School Attendance Officers' Association, quoted by Mr. Slack in the House of Commons (*Hansard*, April 18, 1905, 4th Series, Vol. 145, p. 533).

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, July 9, 1903, Vol. 125, p. 194. See also *ibid.*, February 14, 1905, Vol. 141, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1904, Vol. 133, pp. 782-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 784.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 788; Sir John Gorst, *ibid.*, July 9, 1903, Vol. 125, p. 196.

created too profound an impression to be ignored. Yet even now the Government were not prepared for legislation. They were of opinion that there still existed a wide divergence of views as to the extent of underfeeding and the remedies to be applied. Accordingly, in March, 1905, another Departmental Committee was appointed to collect further information.<sup>1</sup>

The reference of this Committee made it clear that the Government had no intention of allowing the rates to be utilised for the supply of food. In the matter of feeding, the Committee were merely to enquire into the relief given by the various voluntary agencies, and report "whether relief of this character could be better organised, without any charge upon public funds."<sup>2</sup> The Report was, therefore, mainly concerned with questions of administration. A careful and elaborate account was given of the existing agencies all over England, the methods employed, the sums expended, and the kind of relief given. Evidence was received from representatives of all the more important societies in London and the provinces. It was found that outside London feeding agencies existed in 55 out of the 71 county boroughs, in 38 out of the 137 boroughs and in 22 out of the 55 large urban districts.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these there were numerous efforts of a spasmodic character, school meals being often started hastily during some special emergency. The Committee estimated that the total amount spent on the provision of meals in England and Wales was approximately £33,568, of which £10,299 was spent in

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, March 13, 1905, Vol. 142, p. 1185.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Vol. I., p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 55, pars. 182, 186, 189. The total number of these agencies was 140. Of these 71 were permanent (*i.e.*, had been in existence over a year), 24 were new, and 45 were intermittent in their operations.

London.<sup>1</sup> But these figures were "very far from representing the full amount of money spent out of charitable sources."<sup>2</sup> No account was taken of the innumerable philanthropic agencies existing all over the country, such as Soup Kitchens, District Visiting Societies and the like, who were incidentally spending large sums on the provision of food for school children. Moreover, the impracticability of obtaining returns from all the feeding agencies and the varying methods in which their accounts were made up, made any exact computation impossible.

In the evidence given before the Committee, we note the same evils prevailing as had been discovered in former years. There is the same diversity in the method of selection and the same inadequate provision. We find still the practice of giving a child a meal two or three days a week only.<sup>3</sup> In the great majority of cases the feeding was confined to the winter months, though many

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80, pars. 290-293.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79, par. 291.

<sup>3</sup> "At present," declared one witness, "the funds are wasted through their being distributed over too large a number of children. . . . At one school . . . the headmaster asked the boys whether they would like to have their ticket this week or next week." (*Ibid.*, Vol. II., Q. 1780, evidence of Mr. T. E. Harvey.) At Norwich, a child received a meal only once a week. "There was no system of feeding the children regularly. They had to take it in turns." (*Ibid.*, Q. 4228, evidence of Mrs. Pillow.) At Hull it was "a rough rule given to the teacher" that a child should be fed every other day. (*Ibid.*, Qs. 6157, 6158, evidence of Mr. G. F. Grant.) See also evidence given by Mrs. Adler (Qs. 135-136), Mrs. Burgwin (Q. 446), and the Rev. J. C. Mantle (Q. 2452). It was even urged by Mr. Hookham, of Birmingham, that the insufficiency of the provision was a positive advantage. The fact "that there are more children wanting meals than can get them . . . is the main safeguard against imposition." Without this safeguard, he declares, "you will lose the evidence which the children give against one another when imposition takes place, which I think is the most valuable of all evidence" (*Ibid.*, Q. 1253.)

witnesses were of opinion that meals should be obtainable in the summer also.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee were convinced that, in all county boroughs and large towns, no voluntary agency which extended beyond the limits of one or two schools could be worked properly, except in intimate connection with, if not directly organised by, the Local Education Authority. To avoid overlapping and abuse it was essential that managers and school teachers should be required to supply full information, and only the Local Authority had power to insist on this being done.<sup>2</sup> The Committee deprecated "the proneness for starting school meals hastily upon some special emergency."<sup>3</sup> It was essential that any organisation for feeding school children should be of a permanent character and provision should be made for enabling meals to be given where necessary throughout the year.<sup>4</sup> It was desirable that meals should be obtainable on every school day, and it should be the object of the feeding agency to feed the most destitute children regularly rather than a larger number irregularly.<sup>5</sup> The Committee recognised the valuable help which had been given by the teachers. Many of the systems for feeding the children had in fact originated entirely with them, whilst in many more the whole brunt of the work had fallen upon them. But this work involved too great a strain upon the teachers and they should not be required to supervise the meals unless their attendance was indispensable.<sup>6</sup> Nor in the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I., pp. 75-76, pars. 280-281. The meals given at Bradford were continued all through the year, and so were the breakfasts given by Mr. Hookham at Birmingham (*ibid.*).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59, par. 208.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75, par. 279.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 85, par. 306, secs. 3, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85, pars. 5, 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 61, pars. 210, 215.

matter of the selection of the children should the teachers be asked to do more than draw up the preliminary list. They had no time for visiting the homes nor were they always the most competent persons for making enquiries. The final selection of the children should be in the hands of a Relief Committee, which should be formed for each school or group of schools.<sup>1</sup> The increasing attention paid to the medical side of the question is shown by the recommendation that, wherever possible, the advice and guidance of the school doctor should be obtained.<sup>2</sup> The Committee refer with approval to the proposal that a system of school restaurants should be established, at which meals could be supplied at cost price. "Not much attempt," they say, "has yet been made through the medium of school meals towards raising the standard of physical development among the children and promoting a taste for wholesome and nourishing food."<sup>3</sup> In view of the very divergent opinions expressed by witnesses, the Committee were unable to come to a clear conclusion whether or not such restaurants would succeed, but they would "welcome experiments made in this direction."<sup>4</sup> The restaurants, they thought, would probably have to be kept separate from any system of free dinners, for attempts to combine free and cheap meals had always ended in failure. In country districts, where the children often lived at a great distance from the school, the need for school restaurants was distinctly felt. The lunches brought by the children were generally of a most unsatis-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 85, pars. 220, 306 (secs. 9, 10).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66, par. 236. So far as the committee could discover, "the question of malnutrition and underfeeding has attracted very little attention in connection with medical inspection. There appears to be no area where the Medical Officer works in close touch with the organisations for the feeding of children." (*Ibid.*, p. 25, par. 97.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68, par. 242.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71, par. 258.

factory nature. The Committee were of opinion that the managers should arrange for the provision of a hot dinner, or at any rate soup or cocoa, for those children who were unable to go home at midday. A charge should be made which should at least cover the cost of the food.<sup>1</sup>

The report of the Committee was published late in 1905. Meanwhile the Parliamentary agitation had continued. Two Bills were introduced in March by Mr. Claude Hay and Mr. Arthur Henderson.<sup>2</sup> These were withdrawn to make way for a resolution moved by Mr. (afterwards Sir Bamford) Slack—"that in the opinion of this House, the Local Education Authorities should be empowered (as unanimously recommended by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, 1904) to make provision, under such regulations and conditions as they may decide, for ensuring that all the children at any public elementary school in their area shall receive proper nourishment before being subjected to mental or physical instruction, and for recovering the cost, where expedient, from the parents or guardians."<sup>3</sup> This resolution marks an important stage in the movement, for it received support from all sides of the House, and was passed by a considerable majority.<sup>4</sup> One feature of the debate was new. It was no longer said that the matter should be left solely to private charity.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58, par. 205. This was already being done in some rural schools. At Siddington, for instance, a hot dinner had been supplied for the last two years, the parents' payments more than covering the cost of the food. (*Ibid.*, par. 202.) We have already alluded to the experiment at Rousdon, where dinners were provided throughout the year in a specially provided dining-room, as a part of the school organisation. Here the cost of the food was not quite covered by the parents' payments. (*Ibid.*, par. 203.)

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, March 27 and 29, 1905, Vol. 143, pp. 1307-9, 1543.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, April 18, 1905, Vol. 145, p. 531.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1906, Vol. 152, p. 1394.

The main point at issue now was whether the money required should come from the Education rate or the Poor rate.<sup>1</sup>

(d)—*Provision by the Guardians*

Following on this resolution came an attempt to deal with the question through the machinery of the Poor Law. By the Relief (School Children) Order,<sup>2</sup> issued in April, 1905, the Guardians were empowered to grant relief to the child of an able-bodied man without requiring him to enter the workhouse or perform the outdoor labour test.<sup>3</sup> Any relief so given was to be on loan if the case was one of habitual neglect, and might be so given in any case at the discretion of the Guardians.<sup>4</sup> Except with the special sanction of the Local Government Board proceedings were always to be taken to recover the cost.<sup>5</sup> The children of widows and of wives not living with their husbands were expressly excluded from the scope of the order.<sup>6</sup> The reason

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, April 18, 1905, Vol. 145, p. 554. The balance of opinion was at this date in favour of the latter. Sir John Gorst thought that where the parents could not pay for the meals "reference should be made to the Poor Law authority, and the natural consequences of the receipt of public relief would follow." (*Ibid.*, July 9, 1903, Vol. 125, p. 197.) In the Bill introduced by Mr. Claude Hay in March, 1905, provision was made for payment of the cost of meals by the Guardians, but any parent receiving such relief from the Guardians might apply to a court of summary jurisdiction and the court, "if satisfied that the parent's . . . inability to pay is temporary and arises from no fault of his own," might make an order that he should not be disfranchised. (Elementary Education (Feeding of Children) Bill, 1905, clause 3.)

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the working of this order see the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, 8vo. edition, Vol. III., pp. 160-162.

<sup>3</sup> Relief (School Children) Order, 1905, Article V. (in 35th Report of Local Government Board, 1905-6, p. 322).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Article II., sec. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Article VI. Whether the amount was recovered or not the parent became a pauper, and was disfranchised.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Article VII.



for this omission was that these children could already be dealt with by the Guardians and that, therefore, no further sanction was needed, but this was not clearly explained by the Local Government Board, and was indeed not generally understood.<sup>1</sup> It was recommended that, where charitable organisations existed, the Guardians should make arrangements with them for the supply of food; in other cases an arrangement might be made with a local shopkeeper.<sup>2</sup> A circular issued by the Board of Education to the Local Education Authorities, explaining how these authorities could co-operate with the Guardians in carrying out the order, classified underfed children under three heads:—(1) those whose parents were permanently impoverished; (2) those whose parents through illness, loss of employment, or other unavoidable causes were temporarily unable to provide for them; (3) those whose parents, though capable of making provision, had neglected to do so. It was suggested that the second of these groups of cases should be left to the voluntary agencies, the first and third being dealt with by the Guardians.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The whole Order," declared Mr. Wyatt, the Director of Elementary Education at Manchester, "was a most perplexing thing. Very early in the year there came down to Manchester a Poor Law Inspector who said that the construction of the Order was that the children of widows or deserted women should not come under the Order. That swept away a great many of those we had been feeding." (Report of Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Q. 1208.) Miss Margaret Frere was of opinion that the Order would be a dead letter in that it ruled out the two most difficult classes, one being widows and deserted wives. (Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Vol. II., Q. 483.)

<sup>2</sup> Circular of Local Government Board accompanying Relief (School Children) Order, in 35th Report of Local Government Board, 1905-6, p. 320.

<sup>3</sup> Circular issued by the Board of Education to the Local Education Authorities re Relief (School Children) Order, April 28, 1905.

In a large number of Unions this order was entirely disregarded.<sup>1</sup> In London the County Council, though ready to assist in carrying it out where local authorities desired it, declined to initiate proceedings, for they did not look upon the order as "materially helping the solution of the problem."<sup>2</sup> Where the Local Education Authority and the Guardians agreed on a scheme, there was constant friction. This was only to be expected. The opposing views of the two bodies—the one actuated by a desire to ensure that children should not be prevented by lack of food from taking advantage of the education provided for them, the other imbued with the spirit of deterrence—militated against any successful co-operation. When the Local Education Authority sent in lists of underfed children, the Guardians cut them down ruthlessly.<sup>3</sup> There

<sup>1</sup> The order "has been so far practically a dead letter in this district" [the counties of Bedford, Hertford, Huntingdon, etc.]. (35th Report of Local Government Board, 1905-6, p. 452.) Such seems to have been the case also in Yorkshire and the northern counties, in Wales, in Essex and in Surrey, for we find no mention of the Order in the reports of the Inspectors for these districts.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, July 11, 1905, p. 297. The Council objected to the introduction of a dual authority in every district, which would cause delay and possibly friction; the absence of any provision for uniformity of rules in the different districts; and the radical error of allowing the cost to fall on the local authorities instead of on Government funds, or at least on the rates of London as a whole. The risk of fathers being disfranchised as a result of meals being supplied by the Guardians to their children without their knowledge, would militate against the usefulness of the scheme (*ibid.*). As a matter of fact very few cases were relieved in London under the Order. (*Hansard*, July 31, 1906, Vol. 162, p. 680.) In two unions, Fulham and Wandsworth, where the Guardians offered to assist, the Council allowed lists to be sent from the schools, but the great majority of these children were reported by the Relieving Officers not to be underfed. (Report of Joint Committee on Underfed Children for 1905-6, p. 4.)

<sup>3</sup> At Bristol out of 129 applications from the Local Education Authority, the Guardians felt justified in giving relief in 12 cases

was no serious contention that these children did not need food, but merely that their parents' circumstances were such that they could afford to provide it. Undoubtedly under the voluntary feeding system there had been much abuse, many parents obtaining the meals when they were in receipt of good incomes.<sup>1</sup> But in these cases, with very few exceptions,<sup>2</sup> no pressure was brought to bear by the Guardians on the parents to force them to provide adequate food for their children, and the children consequently remained unfed. In many cases the fathers of the children indignantly refused to allow them to receive the meals when they discovered that disfranchisement was entailed.

At Bradford, where the most systematic attempt was

only. (35th Report of Local Government Board, 1905-6, p. 480.) At Chorlton, relief was given in 219 cases out of 1,295 applications; at Salford in 175 out of 1,086. (*Ibid.*, p. 504.) At Stoke-on-Trent, out of 72 cases reported 4 were relieved, and at Ecclesall Bierlow 51 cases were reduced after careful investigation to one. (*Ibid.*, pp. 488, 520.) At Kettering, on the other hand, practically all the cases referred to the Guardians were relieved. (Report of Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, Appendix, Vol. I., Q. 6443.) This, however, was exceptional.

<sup>1</sup>At Birmingham it was found that many parents "were earning over 30s. a week, and in one case the parent was in constant employment with an average rate of £3 17s. 6d. a week." (35th Report of Local Government Board, 1905-6, p. 495.) At Bolton, some of the parents were receiving from £2 to £3 a week. (*Ibid.*, p. 506.)

<sup>2</sup>In the Bolton Union, in cases where the father's income was considered sufficient to provide meals without assistance, "the children were specially watched and reported upon by the Cross Visitor each fortnight, until the Guardians were satisfied that the parents were carrying out their responsibility in this respect. . . . The Relieving Officer visits the home at meal time, or in the evening, to see what provision is made for feeding the children." (35th Report of Local Government Board, 1905-6, p. 503.) At Birmingham the head teachers were of opinion that the children were being better looked after by their parents than formerly owing to the way in which the Order was being carried out. (*Ibid.*, p. 495.)

made to carry out the order, the disputes and difficulties proved endless. "The principles upon which the Guardians . . . proceeded in selecting the children to be fed were," declared Mr. F. W. Jowett, "such as made not for the feeding of the children so much as for the saving of expense."<sup>1</sup> The quality of the food and the conditions under which the meals were served<sup>2</sup> were hotly criticised. The attempt on the part of the Guardians to recover the cost from the parents raised a storm of protest.<sup>3</sup> Finally, in May, 1907, the Guardians announced their intention of discontinuing the provision of meals and the Local Education Authority took over the work.<sup>4</sup> In no

<sup>1</sup> Bradford City Council Proceedings, September 26, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> At the centres provided by the Guardians "the children were kept outside the doors until all was ready, and when they were allowed to enter they came in without any semblance of order, to tables without cloths, without seats." (*Bradford and its Children : How They are Fed*, by Councillor J. H. Palin, 1908, pp. 6-7.) Later the Guardians distributed the children among various little eating-houses in the town, where the food was better, though the conditions of serving were not much improved. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, February 28, 1906, Vol. 152, p. 1129; Bradford City Council Proceedings, September 26, 1905; see also the local newspapers about this time. The prosecutions were apparently confined to those cases where the underfeeding of the children was due to neglect on the part of the parents. The charge fixed by the Guardians was, however, very high, 3d. per meal. Up to March 1, 1906, action had been taken in the County Court against 51 men and orders for payment obtained in each case. (A short account of the working of the Relief (School Children) Order, issued by the Bradford Poor Law Union, 1906; Report of Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Qs. 1702-05.) In other unions there seems to have been little or no attempt to recover the cost. At Birmingham, for instance, it was reported, "the process of recovery laid down by the Local Government Board was farcical in character and was dropped." (Report of Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, Appendix, Vol. IV., Q. 43626, par. 37.)

<sup>4</sup> Extracts from the Annual Reports of the Bradford Education Committee for the four years ended March 31, 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1910 in respect to the working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, p. 3.

other town was the action of the Guardians prolonged to so late a date. By the end of 1906, indeed, the Order had become a dead letter. Meanwhile, the public having assumed that everything necessary would be undertaken by the Poor Law Authorities, voluntary contributions had declined.<sup>1</sup>

(e)—*The Education (Provision of Meals) Act*

The Relief (School Children) Order having proved a "relative failure," to use Mr. John Burns' moderate expression,<sup>2</sup> and the evidence given before the Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding of School Children having demonstrated once more the inadequacy of existing agencies to cope with the evil, it became imperative for Parliament to take action. Early in 1906 the Education (Provision of Meals) Bill was introduced.<sup>3</sup> The opposition to this Bill, both inside<sup>4</sup> and outside<sup>5</sup> the House,

<sup>1</sup> At Birmingham the Free Dinner Society, after an existence of thirty years, ceased its operations when the Order came into force. (Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, Appendix, Vol. I., Q. 8525.) "There was at first," declared Mr. Jenner Fust, a Local Government Board Inspector, "much misapprehension among the public as to the scope of the Order, the prevalent idea being that all school children requiring it would now be supplied with free meals at the public expense, and that there was no further occasion for voluntary efforts." (35th Report of the Local Government Board, 1905-6, p. 506.)

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, December 6, 1906, vol. 166, p. 1284.

<sup>3</sup> The Bill was introduced by a private member, Mr. W. T. Wilson. The Government decided to make the matter an open question with their followers. (*Ibid.*, February 22 and March 2, 1906, vol. 152, pp. 525, 1399.)

<sup>4</sup> For the debates on the Bill see *Hansard*, March 2, December 6, 7, 13, 19, 20 and 21, 1906 (vol. 152, pp. 1390-1448; vol. 166, pp. 1273-1292, 1315-1465; vol. 167, pp. 722-780, 1473-1482, 1629-1670, 1865-1881).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the discussions at a conference of representatives of Charity Organisation Societies held in 1906. (*Charity Organisation Review*, July, 1906, pp. 30 *et seq.*)

rested mainly on the familiar arguments respecting parental responsibility and the advisability of leaving all questions connected with relief to the Poor Law Authorities. We hear also the objection that free meals must lead to a reduction in wages.<sup>1</sup> The strongest argument, to which, however, little attention was paid, was that urged by the Edinburgh School Board before the Select Committee of the House of Commons to which the Bill was referred. "The Bill touches the fringe of very serious and comprehensive social problems with which the Imperial Parliament should deal, and it [the School Board] objects to so much power being placed upon a local authority before Parliament has dealt with serious principles underlying the questions involved."<sup>2</sup> "The causes of low physique and vitality, and inability to profit by instruction" are "insanitation, overcrowding, keeping the children out at night very late or all night, bad footwear, and homes where they have no ventilation at night," irregular meals, "uncleanliness and bad clothing and out-of-school employment."<sup>3</sup> This was very true, but it did not convince the public that nothing should be done. In the experience of Miss Horn, the secretary of the Westminster Health Society, where continuous feeding was combined with regular visits to the parents, there was a distinct improvement in the standard of the homes.<sup>4</sup>

During the Parliamentary debates, for the first time, much emphasis was laid on the educational value of the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Harold Cox, *Hansard*, March 2, 1906, vol. 152, pp. 1412, 1417.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, evidence of Mr. Mill, Chairman of Edinburgh School Board, Q. 4194.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, evidence of Mr. Scott, Head Teacher of Wood Close School, Bethnal Green, Q. 2641. Cf. evidence of Dr. Kerr (Q. 2984), Miss Horn (Qs. 1321-2), and Mr. Ferguson (Q. 2739).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Qs. 1287-1290.

meals if served under proper conditions. Mr. Birrell "could conceive no greater service to posterity than to raise the standard of living in the children of the present day."<sup>1</sup> "It was desired that this work should be not a work of relief, but a work of education," declared Mr. Lough, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education. "They wanted wholesome food given to the children and they wanted the children taught how to eat it, which was a most useful lesson."<sup>2</sup> "This was not merely a question of providing the meals," said Mr. John Burns, "it was also one of teaching better habits and manners."<sup>3</sup> For this work the Local Education Authorities were better fitted than the Guardians, for they "would attract, in a way which Boards of Guardians would not, the services of voluntary agencies, of leisured people . . . and of managers and teachers, whose assistance was absolutely essential."<sup>4</sup> For these reasons it was essential that the Local Education Authorities should have power to provide meals, not only for necessitous children but also, on receipt of payment, for the children of all parents who desired it.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, March 2, 1906, Vol. 152, p. 1441.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, December 6, 1906, Vol. 166, p. 1280.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1285.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* See also the speeches of Mr. Jowett (*ibid.*, March 2, 1906, Vol. 152, p. 1412), Mr. Claude Hay (*ibid.*, December 6, 1906, Vol. 166, p. 1288) and the Earl of Crewe (*ibid.*, December 19, 1906, Vol. 167, p. 1478). An amendment to substitute the Poor Law Guardians for the Local Education Authority as the authority for the administration of the Act was defeated by an overwhelming majority, the voting being 290 to 36. (*Ibid.*, December 6, 1906, Vol. 166, pp. 1274-1288.) The Local Government Board did not, in fact, desire to have the duty imposed on them. (Mr. John Burns, *ibid.*, p. 1285.)

<sup>5</sup> An amendment to limit the provision of meals to underfed children only was defeated by 230 votes to 39. Mr. Lough declared the amendment would strike at the root of one of the objects of the Bill. (*Ibid.*, December 7, 1906, Vol. 166, pp. 1339-40, 1350.)

The new attitude of Society towards the child and the family was brought out by Lord Grimthorpe during the debates in the House of Lords. "The children are the paramount consideration. . . . In a great many cases the parents are already demoralised owing to having themselves been insufficiently nourished in their youth. Because they suffer from those conditions there is no reason why we should inflict similar conditions on the children. . . . Experience in this matter shows us that the sense of parental responsibility will be increased rather than decreased. When the parent sees that his child is regarded by the nation as a valuable national asset he himself will think more of his child." <sup>1</sup>

The Bill received the Royal assent on December 21, 1906.<sup>2</sup> It provided that the Local Education Authority might associate with themselves any committee (called a School Canteen Committee) on which the Authority was represented, who would undertake to provide food, and might aid that committee by furnishing buildings and apparatus and the officers and servants necessary for the organisation, preparation and service of the meals.<sup>3</sup> The parents were to be charged such an amount as might be determined by the Local Education Authority, and, in the event of non-payment, the Local Authority, unless satisfied that the parent was unable to pay, should recover the amount summarily as a civil debt.<sup>4</sup> Failure

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, December 20, 1906, Vol. 167, p. 1637.

<sup>2</sup> 6 Edward VII., c. 57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, clause 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, clause 2. The Select Committee to which the Bill had been referred, while of opinion "that the local education authority ought to undertake the administration rather than the Boards of Guardians," nevertheless recommended that it should be the duty of the Guardians to recover the cost from neglectful parents. (Report of Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, pp. viii., x.) They accordingly inserted a provision to this effect (*see* the Education



on the part of the parent to pay was not, however, to involve disfranchisement.<sup>1</sup> Where the Education Authority resolved "that any of the children attending an elementary school within their area are unable by reason of lack of food to take full advantage of the education provided for them, and have ascertained that funds other than public funds are not available or are insufficient in amount to defray the cost of food," they might, with the sanction of the Board of Education, provide for food out of the rates, the amount thus spent being, however, limited to what would be produced by a halfpenny rate.<sup>2</sup> The teachers might, if they desired, assist in the provision of meals but they were not to be required as part of their duties to do so.<sup>3</sup>

The Bill, when it left the Commons, applied to Scotland as well as England and Wales. The Lords, however, struck out the clause extending its application to Scotland.<sup>4</sup> The Commons, in view of the fact that the session was so far advanced, agreed to this amendment, but under protest.<sup>5</sup> It was not till two years later that the Scottish School Boards, by the Education (Scotland) Act of 1908,<sup>6</sup> received power to spend the rates on the provision of food.

The Provision of Meals Act marks an important point in the history of school feeding. The experiments of (Provision of Meals) Bill as amended by the Select Committee, No. 331 of 1906, clause 2). This was amended in the committee stage in the House of Commons. (*Hansard*, December 7, 1906 Vol. 166, pp. 1439-1444.

<sup>1</sup> 6 Edward VII., c. 57, clause 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, clause 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, clause 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, December 20, 1906, Vol. 167, pp. 1662-1670.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, December 21, 1906, pp. 1865-1881.

<sup>6</sup> 8 Edward VII., c. 63 (December 21, 1908). A Bill was introduced by the Government in 1907, but was withdrawn. (*Hansard*, March 20, 1907, Vol. 171, pp. 880-883.) For an account of the provision made in Scotland see Appendix II.

forty years had amply demonstrated the impossibility of dealing with the evils of underfeeding through voluntary agencies alone. Parliament was indeed still convinced that voluntary organisations were the best bodies to supply the necessary food. The proposal that the duty of providing meals should be cast entirely upon Local Education Authorities, relying only on public funds, had indeed, as the Select Committee of the House of Commons declared, not been "seriously suggested." Such a course would obviously result in the extinction of all voluntary societies, a result "from every point of view . . . much to be deplored."<sup>1</sup> Only where voluntary subscriptions failed might the Local Authority provide the necessary funds. Even in this case there was no compulsion on the authority to take any action whatsoever. Still, with all these limitations, the Act involved the assumption, however partial and incomplete, by the State of the function of securing to its children, by one means or another, the necessary minimum, not only of education, but also of food.

<sup>1</sup> Report of Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, p. vi.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EDUCATION (PROVISION OF MEALS) ACT

WE propose in this chapter to describe the manner in which the Local Education Authorities are administering the Act of 1906. We shall see that the adoption of the Act has been by no means universal and that in many towns provision is still made by voluntary agencies. Where the Act has been put in force we shall find the greatest diversity of practice in such matters as the selection of the children, the dietary provided and the manner in which the meals are served. One Local Authority will construe its duties under the Act in the narrowest sense, cutting down the number of children to be fed to the minimum, and serving the meals with the least possible expense. Another authority will look on the school meal as a valuable means for improving the physique of its scholars ; it will endeavour to secure that all children who are underfed shall be given school meals ; the dietary will be carefully planned, while, in the matter of the service of the meals, the aim will be to make these in every way educational. We shall see that meals are as a rule given only during term-time, holiday feeding out of rates being held to be illegal, while many authorities limit their operations to the winter months. Most authorities have confined their provision almost entirely to necessitous children, the plan of providing meals as a matter of convenience for children of parents who are at

work all day or are otherwise prevented from preparing a midday meal, and who would be able and willing to pay for school dinners, finding but little favour. We shall describe the arrangements made in the Special Schools for defective children, where a dinner is provided either for all children attending the school or for all those who care to stay, and in the Day Industrial Schools, where the provision of three meals a day for all is the rule. We shall discuss the extent to which the provision of meals by the Local Education Authority overlaps the relief given by the Poor Law Guardians. Finally we shall touch upon the question of underfeeding in the rural districts, where the problem is little less urgent than in the towns.

(a)—*The Adoption of the Act*

The Provision of Meals Act came into force on December 21, 1906. As we have seen, it was merely permissive and its adoption was, therefore, only gradual.<sup>1</sup> Many Local Education Authorities contented themselves with making arrangements with voluntary agencies, the Education Committee continuing the already common practice of providing accommodation and apparatus, and the voluntary society providing as hitherto funds for the food. Thus, at Hull, the Education Authority co-operated with the Hull School Children's Help Society, which had been founded in 1885 for the provision of free meals. This arrangement was continued till 1908, when the Society's funds were exhausted and recourse was had

<sup>1</sup> Aston Manor was the first town to apply for authority to levy a rate. Bradford, Manchester, and other towns soon followed. During the year ended March 31, 1908, 40 authorities were authorised to levy a rate. During the two following years the number was increased to 85 and 96 respectively. (Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, p. 8; Report of the Board of Education for 1908-9, p. 123; ditto for 1909-10, p. 62.)

to the rates.<sup>1</sup> At Scarborough, the Amicable Society, which had been founded in 1729 "for clothing and educating the children of the poor of Scarborough," arranged with the Education Authority that the provision of meals should be organised through a Joint Committee of the two bodies.<sup>2</sup> At Liverpool, where the provision of meals had been undertaken since the early part of 1906, before the Act was passed, by a voluntary committee consisting of members of the Education Committee, the Central Relief Society, the Guardians and others, this system was continued for some years. In spite of strenuous opposition in 1908 from the Labour party and the local Fabian Society, who complained that the numbers fed were far below the number in need of food, and that no proper attempt was made to ascertain the extent of the need, a special committee appointed by the Education Committee to investigate the whole question reported that the existing voluntary system was adequate. It was not till November, 1909, that the Education Committee resolved that, "after full consideration of the circumstances and after having regard to the fact that it has been necessary to call upon the general public on two occasions during each year for subscriptions to the funds, the Committee cannot but conclude that the time has now come when the provisions of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, should be put into force, and, therefore, *though with great reluctance*," they recommended that application be made to the Board of Education for power to levy a rate.<sup>3</sup>

Leicester, perhaps, furnishes the most notable example

<sup>1</sup> Appendix to Minutes of the Hull Education Committee, October 22, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Scarborough Amicable Society for 1910, pp. 5, 8.

<sup>3</sup> "Feeding the Children," by H. Beswick, in the *Clarion*, October 11, 1912.

of the survival of the voluntary principle. In 1906, when the Provision of Meals Bill was before Parliament, the Town Council appears to have been in favour of it. After the Act was passed, however, the Leicester branch of the Charity Organisation Society opposed its adoption. At a conference between representatives of the Charity Organisation Society and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, a scheme was formulated for administering the Act from voluntary funds. The scheme was accepted by the Town Council, and the formation of the Children's Aid Association was the result.<sup>1</sup> This body consists chiefly of members of the Charity Organisation Society and of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, with a small minority representing the Education Committee. In spite of considerable opposition from the Labour party, who demand that the Act shall be put into force, meals are still provided by this Association out of voluntary funds.<sup>2</sup>

This delay on the part of the Local Authorities in towns where, it was asserted, it was notorious that children suffered from want of food,<sup>3</sup> led to an attempt to make the School Medical Officer responsible for determining

<sup>1</sup> First Annual Report of the Leicester Children's Aid Association, 1907-8, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the methods adopted, see post, pp. 96-7. A somewhat similar system is in force at Chesterfield, where the arrangements for feeding are made by the Civic Guild, the expense being borne out of their funds. The Education Committee is represented on the General Council and Executive Committee of the Guild in a general sense, not in connection with feeding alone. Cases of children requiring food are reported by the Attendance Officers, and are fed at once by the Guild, investigation being made afterwards. If help is found necessary the whole family is adequately relieved. Arrangements are usually made for the children to be fed at eating-houses. The number of children so dealt with is very small.

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, April 23, 1909, 5th Series, Vol. 3, p. 1797

whether or not it was necessary to put the Act in force. In December, 1908, a Bill was introduced by the Labour party with the object of providing that, when requested by the Education Committee, by a majority of the managers, or by the head teachers, the Local Authority should provide for the medical inspection of the children for the purpose of determining whether they were suffering from insufficient or improper food; if the medical inspector reported that the children were so suffering, the Local Authority should be obliged to provide food. The Bill was not proceeded with, and the same fate befell four similar Bills introduced within the next five years.<sup>1</sup>

In 1911-1912, out of 322 Local Education Authorities in England and Wales, 131 were returned as making some provision for the feeding of school children (*i.e.* 13 counties, including London, 57 County Boroughs, 35 Boroughs and 26 Urban Districts).<sup>2</sup> Of these 95 were spending rates on the provision of food; 19 were spending rates on administrative charges only (accommodation, apparatus, etc.), the cost of food being borne by voluntary funds; whilst in the remaining 17 areas<sup>3</sup> the cost of both food and administration was met by voluntary contributions.

The steady decrease in the amount derived from voluntary contributions, and the increase in rates are shown by the following table :—<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Education (Administrative Provisions) Bill, December 8, 1908; February 19, 1909; April 14, 1910; February 19, 1912; April 15, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, pp. 320-322, 329.

<sup>3</sup> The most important of these are Leicester, Sunderland, and Barnsley.

<sup>4</sup> See Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, p. 30, and (for London) p. 24; ditto for the year ended March 31, 1910, p. 20; Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, p. 309; ditto for 1911, p. 332. The voluntary contributions are understated in the figures for 1908-9, and possibly throughout. The

	Rates.	Voluntary Contri- butions.	Miscellaneous sources (contri- butions from parents, Poor Law Guardians, etc.)	Total.
	£	£	£	£
For the year 1908-9 ..	67,524	17,831	335	85,690
For the year 1909-10 ..	125,372	9,813	906	136,091
For the year 1910-11 ..	140,875	7,537	1,370	149,782
For the year 1911-12 ..	151,763	3,064	2,292	157,127 <sup>1</sup>

The total number of children fed is given in the returns for 1911 as 124,685.<sup>2</sup> This, however, does not include a few counties and towns which did not return the number fed during the year. In most of these areas the number fed is very small, but at Barnsley the number attending daily was about 2,917, and in London the highest number fed in any one week during the year was 44,983. If we take these figures as representing roughly between two-fifths and one half of the total number of children who were fed at some time or other during the year, we get a total of about 230,000,<sup>3</sup> out of a total school population of 5,357,567.<sup>4</sup>

returns for 1908-9, for instance, do not include Liverpool, where the whole cost was defrayed by voluntary contributions, and no financial details were supplied to the Board.

<sup>1</sup> The discrepancy in the total for 1911-12 is due to the fact that the figures in the several columns are not given exactly, but to the nearest £.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, pp. 322-24, 330.

<sup>3</sup> This does not include children fed at Day Industrial Schools, Open Air Schools or, with one or two exceptions, Special Schools for Mentally or Physically Defective Children.

<sup>4</sup> This number represents the average attendance at the ordinary Elementary Schools, not the total number on the rolls. (Statistics of Public Education in England and Wales, 1911-12, Part I., pp. 27, 333.)



In most towns where the Act has been adopted the amount spent on food is well within the limit of the halfpenny rate. In 1911-12, only Bradford and Stoke-on-Trent exceeded the limit, the latter (by an inconsiderable sum) owing to the coal strike. At Bradford the rate has almost from the first been annually exceeded by a considerable amount.<sup>1</sup> This excess is due partly to the numbers fed (a large proportion of the children receiving breakfasts as well as dinners), partly to the fact that the meals are continued throughout the holidays. The Local Government Board Auditor has regularly surcharged the excess expenditure, but the Finance Committee defrays it out of the Corporation trading profits, which are not subject to the Local Government Board audit.

The limitation of the rate has in some towns undoubtedly restricted operations. In 1909, for instance, the Workington Education Committee were reluctantly obliged, owing to the exhaustion of the funds raised by the halfpenny rate, to stop the meals at a time of great distress.<sup>2</sup> At East Ham, the product of a halfpenny rate not being sufficient for a whole year, meals can only be given during the winter months.<sup>3</sup>

We may note that the power of the Local Education Authorities to provide food for necessitous children is

<sup>1</sup> In 1908-9, by £1,645; in 1909-10, by £2,370; in 1910-11, by £1,163, and in 1911-12, by £374. (Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, p. 26; Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, p. 304; ditto for 1911, p. 317.)

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, April 23, 1909, 5th Series, Vol. 3, pp. 1862-1863. A similar complaint was received from Hartlepool. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> See Minutes of Kingston-on-Hull Provision of Meals Sub-Committee, March 24, 1911, Appendix, p. 16. The abortive Bills introduced in 1908 and the following years by Labour members contained a clause that the limitation of the rate should be abolished.

not limited to their powers under the Provision of Meals Act. By the Education Act of 1902 grants may be given for the maintenance of children at Secondary Schools. At Bradford, at any rate, in quite a number of cases this grant is earmarked for providing school meals.<sup>1</sup> More important is the power to provide three meals daily for all children attending Day Industrial Schools. These children are drawn very largely from the class to whom free meals would have to be given if they were attending the ordinary elementary schools.<sup>2</sup> Again, necessitous children who are physically or mentally defective can receive meals at the Special Schools, and the cost of the food (and other expenses) can be charged to the Special Schools account. Thus, at Liverpool, dinner is provided for all defective children, this provision having been undertaken deliberately as part of the school curriculum long before the Provision of Meals Act was passed. The class of physically defective children for whom Special Schools can be provided include not only cripples, but all children who are certified by a doctor to be "by reason of . . . physical defect . . . incapable of receiving proper benefit from the instruction in the ordinary public elementary schools."<sup>3</sup> This wide definition enables the School Medical Officer to send to the Open Air Schools, which several Local Authorities have established, and at which one or more meals a day are provided, not only children suffering from definite diseases, but also those who are underfed, anæmic and generally debilitated, to whom the fresh air,

<sup>1</sup> "School Feeding," by Wm. Leach, in the *Crusade*, November, 1911 (Vol. 2, p. 192).

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller account of the arrangements made for providing food at the Day Industrial Schools and the Special Schools see post, pp. 117-122.

<sup>3</sup> Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, 1899 (62 and 63 Vict., c. 32, sec. 1 (1)).

healthy life and regular, wholesome meals prove an inestimable boon.

(b)—*Canteen Committees, their constitution and functions*

The arrangements for carrying out the Provision of Meals Act are usually in the hands of a Committee called variously the School Canteen Committee, the Children's Care Committee, the Underfed Children's Meals Committee, or, as at Leicester, the Children's Aid Association. The constitution of this Committee varies in different towns. Sometimes it is composed entirely of members of the Education Committee.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes outside bodies, such as Boards of Guardians and voluntary agencies, are represented upon it. Thus at Crewe the Children's Care Committee consists of representatives of the Local Education Authority, teachers, Guardians and various voluntary societies.<sup>2</sup> At Leicester the members of the Education Committee are in the minority, the Children's Aid Association being composed chiefly of members of the Charity Organisation Society and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Elsewhere the Committee may be composed entirely, or almost entirely, of voluntary workers. Thus at Leeds, where all the members are women, all, except the Chairman and Vice-chairman, who are members of the Education Committee, are voluntary workers; two Inspectors attend the meetings and carry recommendations to the Education Committee, but they do not vote. At Bury St. Edmunds, where the Committee is also composed of women members, the only representative of the Education Committee is the official who holds the post of Borough

<sup>1</sup> As at Birkenhead, Bradford, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Stoke, West Ham.

<sup>2</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Crewe, 1911, p. 23.

Treasurer and Secretary to the Education Committee. At Bournemouth the schools are grouped under four District Care Committees, composed of voluntary workers nominated by the School Managers, and of representatives of the head teachers, the School Attendance Officers being *ex officio* members. These District Care Committees are controlled by a Central Care Committee, composed partly of members of the Education Committee, and partly of co-opted members. The School Medical Officer here, as in some other towns, is an *ex officio* member.<sup>1</sup>

The functions of the Canteen Committee also vary in different towns. Sometimes, as at Bradford, all the arrangements for the management of the centres and the decision as to which children shall be fed are in the hands of the Committee. At Leeds the Committee has no executive power, its functions being limited to making recommendations to the Education Committee as to the management of the dining centres. At Bury St. Edmunds each member of the Committee is responsible for one school, making arrangements with caterers for the feeding of the children and visiting the homes. This visiting of the homes is rarely, if ever, undertaken by members of the Canteen Committee, unless it is composed of voluntary workers.

(c)—*The Selection of the Children*

In the selection of the children who are to receive school meals two methods may be adopted. The selection may be based either on the physical condition of the child or on the economic circumstances of the family. The majority of the children selected will, of course, be the same whichever method is adopted, since the child will generally be found to be under-nourished if the family

Report of the School Medical Officer for Bournemouth for 1911, pp. 5-7.

income is inadequate, and vice versa; but there are some children who, although the family income is comparatively good, are yet, for some cause or other, underfed, and these will be excluded if the "poverty test" is the only criterion used. From the first the Board of Education has urged that the "physical test" should be used as well as the "poverty test." The administration of the Provision of Meals Act should be carried on in the closest co-operation with the School Medical Service.<sup>1</sup> The School Medical Officer should approve the dietary, he should supervise the quality, quantity, cooking and service of the food and should inspect the feeding centres.<sup>2</sup> In the selection of the children he should take an important part. Not only should he recommend for school meals all cases of bad or insufficient nutrition observed in the course of medical inspection. "The end to be aimed at," writes Sir George Newman, "is that all children admitted to the meals should be medically examined by the School Medical Officer either before, or as soon as possible after, admission."<sup>3</sup> That is to say,

<sup>1</sup> "When a system of medical inspection of school children such as already exists under several Local Education Authorities has been established, the School Canteen Committee, so far as its operations are concerned with underfed, ill-nourished or destitute children, should work in intimate connection with the school medical officer." (Circular issued by the Board of Education, January 1, 1907, in Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, p. 44.) "It is obviously desirable that any arrangements made by a Local Education Authority under the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906 . . . should be co-ordinated, as far as possible, with the arrangements for medical inspection under the Act of 1907." (Board of Education, Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools in England, 1908, p. ii.) The general supervision of the administration of the Act was placed in the hands of the Board's Medical Department.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* for 1911, p. 276. This course is strongly urged by the School Medical Officer for Portsmouth. "All children, however

the Provision of Meals Act should not be considered primarily as a measure for the relief of distress ; " the physical and mental well-being of [the] children . . . should be regarded as the principal object to be kept in view." <sup>1</sup>

Very few authorities have made any attempt to select the children primarily or even to any great extent on the " physical test." In Brighton the plan has perhaps been tried with more thoroughness than in any other town. When, in 1907, the Education Committee undertook the provision of meals in association with the Voluntary Canteen Committee, it was resolved that " the term ' underfed ' . . . should be held to apply distinctively to those scholars who, by reason of more or less continuous antecedent underfeeding, are physically below a certain specified standard of size and weight. These cases, which must of course be the first consideration of any feeding scheme, can only be scientifically detected by a detailed system of medical weighing and examination, and when so detected should be dealt with in accordance with medical advice." <sup>2</sup> Accordingly all the children

selected, either by the physical or poverty test, *should be examined by the School Medical Officer*. This in many areas would involve a good deal of extra work on many medical men who find their time already fully occupied. Yet if any work is worth doing it is worth doing well, and here it is that the value of the School Medical Officer comes in, by culling and recording facts relating to the personal condition of the child, as well as the home conditions and surroundings of his or her life." (" The Importance of a Well-advised and Comprehensive Scheme in the Selection of Children . . . under the Education (Provision of Meals) Act," by Victor J. Blake, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, pp. 22-23.)

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Brighton Education Committee, Report of Canteen Joint Branch Sub-Committee, July 17, 1907. There were, of course, also the cases of " necessitous " children who did not appear on medical grounds to be suffering from malnutrition, but who,

for whom an application for free meals is made are weighed and measured, and the Canteen Committee, when deciding whether any particular child shall be fed or not, has before it this report as to the child's physical condition. Whether the meals are supplied free depends on the economic circumstances of the family. If the child needs meals on medical grounds but the income is adequate, a circular is sent to the parent warning him of the child's condition. Sometimes the parent will be willing for meals to be supplied on payment of the cost. If the parent refuses to pay, meals are not granted, but the name of the child is placed on a special list for observation.<sup>1</sup> Roughly about fifty per cent. of the children are fed solely on economic grounds and fifty per cent. on medical grounds.<sup>2</sup>

At Heston and Isleworth, the Canteen Sub-Committee decided in 1911 to obtain from the School Medical Officer a report on the state of each child before determining from the economic circumstances of the parents, were unable to obtain sufficient food. Children to whom the provision of a mid-day meal would be a convenience, and whose parents were able and willing to pay the cost, should also be provided for. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>1</sup> We have not been able to ascertain exactly what happens to these children on the "watching" list. In 1910 the School Medical Officer reports that they "are examined at intervals by the school doctor, and their progress is noted, the [Canteen] Committee taking such action as is recommended. Enquiries are also carried out by the school nurse, under the supervision of the school doctor, as to the nature of the meals given at home in these cases." (Report on the Medical Inspection of School Children in Brighton for 1910, p. 134.) These home visits by the school nurse are no longer paid.

<sup>2</sup> In 1911, out of 1,050 children who received free meals, 54 were not examined, 550 were recommended by the school doctor on medical grounds, 446 were fed solely on economic grounds. (*Ibid.* for 1911, p. 119.) In 1912, out of 1,070 children fed, 69 were not examined, 422 were recommended on medical and 579 on economic grounds. (*Ibid.* for 1912, p. 122.)

whether it required school meals.<sup>1</sup> At Lancaster also all children who are recommended for free meals are seen by the School Medical Officer.<sup>2</sup>

But these cases are exceptional. In 1909 "the number of Local Education Authorities who left the final selection in the hands of the School Medical Officer, or acted exclusively upon his recommendation or required every application to be endorsed by him," was, so far as the information of the Board of Education extended, less than a dozen.<sup>3</sup> In 1911 Sir George Newman writes, "it is true that in the majority of cases the School Medical Officer takes some part . . . in the work connected with the provision of meals, but the number of cases in which he exercises all the functions . . . appropriately devolving upon him are very few indeed."<sup>4</sup> In the great majority of towns, though the School Medical Officer may recommend for school meals children whom he finds suffering from malnutrition in the course of medical inspection, the greater number of children are selected on the "poverty test."

As a rule the primary selection is made by the teachers, either on their own initiative or on receiving requests from the parents. The School Nurse, the Attendance Officer or perhaps a member of the local Guild of Help may also recommend cases.

Sometimes a personal application by the parent at the Education Offices or before the Canteen Committee is insisted on. Thus at Manchester the parents have to make application either at the Education Offices or at

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Lancaster for 1911, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, up to March 31, 1909, pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 273.



any of the district centres, of which there are twenty-four, situated in different parts of the town, and open at convenient hours. The teachers can advise children, whom they consider to be in need of food, to tell their parents to apply, but they take no further part in the selection of the children. At West Ham also the parents have to apply at the Public Hall or Education Office. The section of the Act dealing with repayment is read to the applicant, who then decides whether or not he wishes his children to be fed.<sup>1</sup> On the parent's signing a form (by which he agrees to repay the cost of meals when he gets into work<sup>2</sup>), tickets are issued for a week, pending enquiry. The parent is expected to send a note to the head teacher each day to say that he or she still wishes the child to be fed.<sup>3</sup> This personal application has to be renewed every month. The teachers are allowed to give urgency tickets for three meals, but if the parents fail to apply the meals have to be discontinued. At Erith "no breakfasts are supplied till the parents have registered at the Distress Committee (if eligible), or have made personal application there, or at the Education Office."<sup>4</sup> At Leicester, again, the parent has to make personal application at the office of the Canteen Committee, and this application has to be renewed every month. At Birmingham, except in special cases, the parent has to attend the meeting of the Committee; if he fails to appear, after being given a second chance, the child, who has meanwhile

<sup>1</sup> Report of West Ham Education Committee for the year ending March 31, 1910, p. 51. This is the procedure now in force.

<sup>2</sup> See post, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> We were informed by the head teacher of an infants' department that she did not insist on a note being sent more than two or three times a week.

<sup>4</sup> Report of Erith Education Committee for the three years ending March 31, 1911.

been temporarily receiving the meals, is removed from the feeding list.<sup>1</sup>

The primary selection of the children having been made, by whatever method, enquiry is then made into the home circumstances of the family. The object of this enquiry is or should be twofold: to ascertain the resources of the family, so as to determine whether the parents are able to provide adequate food for the child or not, and to find out whether help is needed in any other direction, and by friendly advice to improve the conditions of the home. We shall discuss later the great advantages to be obtained from the employment of voluntary workers for the purpose of these friendly home visits, as distinct from the duty of making enquiries.<sup>2</sup> Here it is sufficient to note that very few Education Authorities have made use of their services at all.<sup>3</sup> The most notable example is, of course, furnished by the London Care Committees. A somewhat similar system has been adopted at Bournemouth. Here, as we have seen, the schools have been divided into four groups, and a Care Committee appointed for each. The members investigate the circumstances of children who are alleged to be in want of food and report to their Committee, which thereupon decides whether or not the children shall receive free meals. At Liverpool a tentative effort has been made in the same direction. Care Committees, managed by the different settlements, have for some years

<sup>1</sup> *The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, by Phyllis D. Winder, 1913, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> See post, pp. 145 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, pp. 107-8; ditto for 1911, pp. 104-5. In several of the few towns where Care Committees have been appointed, they take no part in the work of feeding the children, their functions being confined to the "following up" of medical cases and perhaps the finding of employment for the children when they leave school.

been attached to some half-dozen schools, but their position is rather indefinite. The enquiries are made by the School Attendance Officers, but the Education Committee asks the Care Committee for reports on special cases. At one school the Care Committee appears to visit all the cases. A wider scheme for the establishment of a system of Care Committees is at the present time (1913) under consideration. At Brighton also, where Care Committees have been appointed, mainly for the purpose of finding employment and generally supervising the children when they leave school, a Care visitor is sometimes asked to supplement the enquiries of the School Attendance Officers in doubtful cases where a further investigation is needed. At Leicester the enquiries are made by a paid investigator appointed by the Children's Aid Association, subsequent friendly visits being paid by voluntary workers.<sup>1</sup> In most towns, however, the work of enquiry is undertaken solely by the School Attendance Officers.<sup>2</sup>

The thoroughness of the investigation varies considerably in different towns. The parent's statements as to the amount of wages earned are in some cases checked by the enquiries from the employers. At Birmingham the wages are always thus verified where the worker is employed by one firm regularly. At Bradford the wages are verified except when the applicants are working on their own

<sup>1</sup> At Southend-on-Sea enquiry is made by the Civic Guild into many of the cases. (Report of the School Medical Officer for Southend-on-Sea for 1911, p. 54.) At Bradford the Canteen Committee communicates to the Guild of Help the names of all the new cases which are put on the feeding list. The members of the Guild thereupon visit any cases in which other help besides the meals is needed.

<sup>2</sup> As at Birkenhead, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Salford, Sheffield, Stoke, etc. At Birkenhead an attendance officer has been specially appointed for this purpose. At Bradford a special constable has been told off to make enquiries in difficult cases.

account, for instance hawking, when it is clearly impossible. Generally enquiry is made from the employer as to the wages of the head of the house only, but at Leeds and at Leicester the wages of all earning members of the family are verified. At Leicester in doubtful cases enquiries may be made from the employer as often as once a week. In other towns, as at Stoke and York, where the current rates of wages are well known, wages are only verified when there is any doubt as to the parent's statement. At Bootle little attempt is made to verify the information given by the parents. Here the enquiries are made—so far as they can be said to be made at all—by the teachers. The help of the Attendance Officer can be asked in difficult cases, but this appears to be seldom done. The teachers naturally have no time to visit the homes, and the enquiry generally resolves itself into a form being given to the child for its parent to fill up. The parents are asked to state the rent, the number in the family and the total weekly income, taking the average for four weeks. When one considers the difficulty normally experienced in filling up forms correctly, one can readily imagine that the information thus obtained is practically valueless. Where the answers are unintelligible—an occurrence by no means rare to judge from the few specimens of case papers which we have seen—the information may be supplemented by questioning the children.

Often urgency tickets can be issued by the teachers, pending enquiries, as at Bradford, Birmingham, Bootle and Liverpool. At Birkenhead the teacher can only report the need for meals, but the enquiries only take two or three days. At Leeds we were told that a week or ten days generally elapses between the time of application and the child's being placed on the list, with the result that in some cases the most urgent need is passed. It is

true that the head teachers can secure a child's being placed immediately on the list by writing specially to the Education Office, but to do this every time would involve a considerable expenditure on postage, which is not refunded.

When investigation has been made into the home circumstances, the decision as to whether or no the child shall be fed is made generally by the Canteen Committee or by a small sub-committee of this Committee, or perhaps by the Chairman.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the responsibility rests with the Secretary of the Education Committee or some other official, as at Acton and Leeds. At Bournemouth the cases are decided by the District Care Committees, which are composed of voluntary workers and teachers. At Bootle the decision appears to rest entirely in the teachers' hands.

The decision is based on a consideration of the family income. Many authorities have adopted a scale. At Birmingham meals are granted if the income per head, after rent is deducted, does not exceed 2s. 9d. in winter or 2s. 6d. in summer.<sup>2</sup> In Bootle the income limit, in summer and winter alike, is 3s. 6d. for an adult and 2s. 6d. for each child under 14.<sup>3</sup> When we consider, however, the slipshod method of enquiry pursued at Bootle, we cannot attach much importance to the existence on paper of this scale. At Bradford dinners are given if the income does not exceed 3s. per head; if the income is less than 2s., breakfasts also are given. This scale is taken only as a rough criterion of the needs of the family. Special circumstances are taken into account, such as the size of the family, sickness, old debts, etc. And where the

<sup>1</sup> Thus, at Birkenhead, where the Canteen Committee meets very seldom, the cases are decided by the Chairman.

<sup>2</sup> *The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, by Phyllis D. Winder, 1913, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Report of Bootle School Canteen Committee, 1911-12, p. 3.

circumstances of the family are slightly above the point at which free meals may be given, the parents are often allowed to receive them on paying  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or rd. towards the cost. At Leeds, on the other hand, the scale, which is a low one (2s. in winter and 1s. 6d. in summer) is, we are informed, rigidly observed. No regard is paid to the circumstances of the family. As a rule, directly the family income rises above the limit, the child's dinners are stopped, no matter how much debt has to be paid off. A delicate child who needed feeding or an underfed neglected child would not be fed if the income was above the limit. At Liverpool the scale is 2s. per head; at Stoke it is 2s. 6d.; at Brighton it is 3s. per adult, two children being reckoned as one adult. In all these towns the limit is not a hard and fast one, regard being paid to any special circumstances. At Manchester a sliding scale has been adopted. If there are five or more in the family the limit is 2s. 6d. per head, if there are only three or four 2s. 9d. is allowed, while if there are only one or two 3s. is allowed.<sup>1</sup> At Salford the limit is 10s. per week for two persons, and 2s. extra for each additional member of the family, rent not being deducted. In other towns, as at Birkenhead, Bournemouth, Leicester and West Ham, there is no fixed scale, each case being decided on its merits.

As a rule the cases are revised about once a month. Sometimes chronic cases will be continued for two or three months at a time, as at Liverpool. At York the cases are revised only twice a year. At the beginning of the winter the head teachers send in lists of children whom they consider to be necessitous. These children (if the Cases Selection Sub-Committee decide to feed them) remain on the feeding list till the following April, when

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Manchester Education Committee, 1910-11, p. 221.

the head teachers are asked to send in a list of children who they consider need not receive meals during the summer. The Attendance Officers visit again and the cases are revised by the Committee. This method is said to be satisfactory as, though officially the cases are revised so seldom, practically the circumstances are known, since the Attendance Officers regularly visit the homes in the course of their ordinary work and the Chairman of the Canteen Committee knows many of the children intimately. At Bootle, where, as we have seen, the decision as to which children shall be fed is practically in the hands of the teachers, there seems to be no system of revising the cases, and the tendency is for a child who is once put on the feeding list to remain on it till the meals are discontinued in the summer, unless the parents voluntarily withdraw the child on an improvement in the home circumstances.

Without discussing here the question whether it is possible to devise any system of selection which can be satisfactory, we may note some of the disadvantages of the methods at present in use. In the first place, since the selection is made in the main through the teachers, it necessarily follows that the numbers fed in any particular school depend very largely on the attitude taken by the head teachers. As a general rule the teachers are keenly interested in the physical welfare of their children, and anxious to do everything in their power which may promote it ; but some teachers are opposed to the provision of meals, feeling that too much is done for the children ; others, again, consider their schools "superior," and do not like their children to go to free meals. Constantly one finds an astonishing disproportion between the numbers fed at two adjacent schools, drawing their children from the same locality. It is true that the character of two schools, within a stone's throw of each

other, may vary in a curious way, one attracting a more prosperous class of children—perhaps because of the personality of the teacher, better buildings, or some other cause—but this would not account for all the difference. At Bootle, for instance, it was reported, “there is apparently an absence of uniformity in assessing the needs of the children; for in the six schools of the poorest neighbourhoods it is found that of the number on the rolls the percentage of scheduled children varies from 6 per cent. to 34 per cent., and that in two schools of almost identical character, in one case 10 per cent. of the children are returned as needing daily breakfasts, and in the other 34 per cent.”<sup>1</sup> Where the teachers are anxious to place all apparently underfed children on the feeding list, pressure is not infrequently exercised by the Education Authority to induce them to keep down the numbers.

When an application by the parent is obligatory, there is cause for very grave doubt whether the provision of meals reaches all for whom it is intended. Miss Winder has shown that, at Birmingham, out of 22,753 children for whom applications were received during the three years 1909–11, 4,700 were not fed because the parent failed to appear before the Committee. She investigated the circumstances of twenty-eight of these families and came to the conclusion that, “although the small number of families investigated cannot justify an absolutely positive assertion, I think it may fairly be concluded

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Bootle School Canteen Committee for 1910–11, p. 22. At Birkenhead, and probably in other towns, the percentage of children fed in the Church of England schools is very much higher than in the Council schools, whilst the Roman Catholic schools feed a larger number still than the Church schools. This is doubtless due partly to the character of the buildings, the non-provided schools being generally very much inferior, and the better-off children being consequently attracted to the Council schools; partly, of course, also to the fact that the Roman Catholic population is chiefly Irish and very poor.



that, on the whole, they are representative of most of the families whose applications are not granted, and that the home circumstances of these families are much the same as those of the families whose applications have been granted.”<sup>1</sup> This is the impression gained from enquiries at other towns. At West Ham it is clear that there are children who need the meals, but do not get them because their parents will not apply. The number of “missed” cases does not appear to be large, for the Act is administered in a sympathetic spirit, the Superintendent of Visitors impressing on the Attendance Officers that they should bring to his notice any case where the children appear to be suffering from lack of food. But there are cases where the parents, though they will take the urgency tickets for three meals which the teachers can give them, will take no further action. At one school the headmaster pointed out two boys who looked obviously in need of food and attention generally, but whose father, though out of work, would not apply. In another case he had used his discretion and kept two boys on the list for a month in spite of their parents’ failure to renew their application, but he felt obliged at last to take them off though he considered that they still needed the meals. In such cases the Attendance Officers are supposed to visit the homes to find out the cause of the children’s underfed condition, and to urge the parents, if necessary, to make application for school meals, but this course does not seem to be by any means always pursued.

At Leicester again, nothing appears to be done in those cases where the child needs food but the parent refuses to apply. And such cases appear to be frequent. We were told by the vicar of a very poor parish that numbers of the parents would not make the necessary

<sup>1</sup> *The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, by Phyllis D. Winder, 1913, pp. 27, 29, 59, 62,

application. This evidence seems to be borne out by a comparison of the numbers of cases helped by the Distress Committee and the Canteen Committee. In 1910, for instance, it was found that on September 30, 607 married men and widowers, having 1,145 children wholly, and 214 partly, dependent upon them, were registered at the Labour Bureau as unemployed.<sup>1</sup> These numbers were, of course, not a complete index of the unemployment in the town. But, turning to the report of the Canteen Committee, we find that on the same date only 105 children were being helped.<sup>2</sup> The great discrepancy between these figures seems to point to the fact that the Canteen Committee had not discovered all the cases of children who were suffering from want of food.

The failure of the parents to apply may in some cases be due to laziness and disregard for their children's welfare. Or it may be that they are too sensitive to ask for help. Or again it may be difficult or impossible for them to attend at the time named. The hour is usually fixed so as to be that most convenient for the parents, but it is impossible, of course, to fix a time which will suit all. At Birmingham cases have even occurred "where the father has been obliged to pay tram fares in order to arrive in time to prove his inability to feed his children"!<sup>3</sup>

But even if the parent is not obliged to appear in person, but may send an application by note or verbal message to the teacher, there are still "missed" cases. It is notorious that many parents are too proud to let their need be known; in such cases, as teachers have

<sup>1</sup> *Leicester Pioneer*, October 29, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> Quarterly Report of the Leicester Children's Aid Association, July 1 to September 30, 1910.

<sup>3</sup> *The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, by Phyllis D. Winder, 1913, p. 29.

frequently told us, it may be a considerable time before it is discovered that the child is suffering from want of food; and when the discovery is made there is frequently difficulty in inducing the parents to send the child, or in inducing the child itself to go, to the school meals. There still seems to exist, in certain districts at any rate, an idea that the provision of meals is Poor Law Relief, and parents consequently shrink from applying. Moreover, it is not generally recognised that the provision of school meals is by no means universally known to the parents. The School Medical Officer for Leicester reports that "in certain cases it was a matter for regret that the families had not received help earlier by personally applying for assistance. Ignorance of the existence of the Canteen Committee was given as the reason for non-application."<sup>1</sup> And we have ourselves been told in other towns of cases where the children were suffering from want of food, but were not receiving school meals because the parents were unaware that they could be obtained.

The enquiries into the home circumstances undoubtedly exercise a deterrent influence—to what extent depends on the manner of the particular individual who makes the enquiries—both with the more independent parent who resents the investigator's visit, and with the criminal and semi-criminal parent whose record does not bear close investigation. Thus the headmaster of a school in one of the worst districts of Liverpool told us that numbers of the boys were in need of food but the parents would not submit to the necessary enquiries and consequently meals were not granted. At Leicester, the searching enquiries made by the Canteen Committee, which, it must be remembered, is practically a department

<sup>1</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Leicester for 1912, p. 36.

of the Charity Organisation Society, coupled with the insistence on an application by the parent in person, result, as we have seen, in numbers of underfed children remaining underfed.

Where the Education Authority has adopted a scale of income on which to base the decision as to which children shall be fed, this scale is frequently below, and in some cases very considerably below, the minimum amount which has been shown to be necessary for expenditure on food.<sup>1</sup> Where the scale is rigidly adhered to, two classes of children are excluded altogether, those who are underfed through the neglect of their parents to provide for them though able to do so, and those cases where the family income may be sufficient to meet normal calls but where, owing to illness or the delicacy of the children or other special circumstances, extra nourishment is required.

To sum up, we find as between town and town, and even as between school and school in the same town, a great want of uniformity in selecting the children to be fed. Where the Education Authority has determined that all its underfed children shall be provided for, the child's need being the paramount consideration, undiscovered cases of underfeeding are reduced to a minimum. Where, on the contrary, enquiries are carried out in a deterrent manner, or the parent is made to apply in person for the meals, or the selection is based on a rigid application of a scale, there is reason to fear that considerable numbers of children are, and remain, "unable by reason of lack of food to take full advantage of the education provided for them."

<sup>1</sup> See note on page 205, *infra*.

*(d)—The Preparation and Service of the Meals**(i) The Time of the Meal.*

There are considerable differences of opinion as to what kind of meal should be given. Many Local Authorities prefer breakfast. It is argued that when no breakfast is forthcoming at home the interval between the meal the previous evening and the midday dinner is too long, and that it is cruel to expect the child to attend morning school, when the heaviest work of the day is done, without a meal, especially in the cold winter months. By midday the parents, especially in districts where there is much casual labour, may have earned enough to provide some sort of a meal. But the arguments in favour of breakfast—as the sole meal provided—are largely based not so much on the child's physical needs as on the moral effect produced both on the child and the parent. The provision of breakfast furnishes a test of need. The meal is not so popular as dinner, and will only attract those who are really hungry.<sup>1</sup> Co-operation on the part of the mother is demanded, since she must get up early to see the children are dressed in time. Moreover, the provision of breakfast does not act as an inducement to the mother to go out to work, as it is feared the provision of dinner may.

The arguments seem to us overwhelmingly in favour of dinner. The provision of a midday meal may possibly encourage mothers to go out to work, though it is exceedingly difficult to trace such a result to any great extent.

<sup>1</sup> Thus it was found at a school in Bethnal Green that, "in spite of the supervision of a most efficient Care Committee," the change from a porridge breakfast to a meat pie dinner doubled the number of children attending. ("The Feeding of Necessitous Children. A Symposium. I., Experience in S.W. Bethnal Green," by A. W. Chute, in *Oxford House Magazine*, January, 1909, p. 37.)

But on the other hand there are numbers of cases already where the mothers are forced, by stress of circumstances, to be the breadwinners and are obliged to leave home all day, or, if they come home for the dinner hour, have no time to prepare a proper meal. The children will either get a piece of bread, or will be given coppers to buy their own dinner; in either case the meal will be equally unsatisfactory. Possibly the children will go dinnerless altogether, and the afternoon's lessons will then be a serious tax on their brains. The attendance at breakfasts is always less than at dinner.<sup>1</sup> The breakfast acts, that is to say, as a successful "test." But this means that many children, either because their mothers are too lazy to get them dressed early, or because they are too lazy themselves, miss the meals, *though they are admittedly in need of them.*

We do not wish to under-estimate the importance of the moral aspect of the question. It is essential that co-operation on the part of the mother should be demanded. But the child's need must be the first consideration. The laziness of the children, be it noted, is frequently not entirely their own fault; the drowsiness in the morning may be due to the fact that they have slept all night in a crowded room and stuffy atmosphere. Till the deep-rooted objection to open windows at night can be overcome, this will continue to be the case. For this reason too, the children will often have little appetite for breakfast.

Physiologically, again, dinner appears to be the

<sup>1</sup> At West Ham, for instance, where all the children on the feeding list receive both breakfast and dinner, the number of breakfasts given during the year 1911-12 was 247,233, and the number of dinners 273,894; the attendance at breakfast was thus only ninety per cent. of the attendance at dinner. (Report of the West Ham Education Committee for the year ended March 31, 1912, pp. 175-77.)

better meal since it contains a greater quantity of the elements which are lacking in the ordinary home dietary of the child. Thus in the feeding experiment at Bradford in 1907,<sup>1</sup> the porridge breakfast, the most satisfactory kind of breakfast that can be supplied from the food value point of view, contained a proteid value of 19 grammes, and a fat value of 20 grammes. The dinners contained, on an average, 29 grammes of proteid and 18 grammes of fat. Thus the combined proteid and fat value of the breakfasts and dinners was respectively 39 and 47 grammes.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the gain in point of cheapness to be derived from provision on a large scale is much greater relatively in the case of dinners than in the case of breakfasts.

About 27 per cent. of the Local Authorities give breakfasts only, and about 45 per cent. dinners only, the remainder giving both meals.<sup>3</sup> In the last-named case, dinners may be given in some schools and breakfasts in others, as at Southampton and York. At Bradford dinner is given to all the children on the feeding list, the most necessitous receiving breakfast as well.<sup>4</sup> At West Ham all the children receive both meals. At Bootle, where till a few years ago only breakfasts were given, it was found that this provision was inadequate to meet the needs of many necessitous children.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> See post, pp. 184-6.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford Education Committee, Report on a Course of Meals given to Necessitous Children from April to July, 1907, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, pp. 322-324.

<sup>4</sup> Roughly about half the children fed receive both meals (Bradford Education Committee, Return as to the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, for the year ended March 31, 1913.)

<sup>5</sup> Enquiries made by the head teachers showed that in the aggregate 295 children received no mid-day meal or an insufficient meal. Since, presumably, these enquiries were made by the method of questioning the children, no particular value can be

expense and the practical difficulties in the way of providing a proper dinner led the Education Committee to adopt a simpler method, namely, that of increasing the quantity of food supplied for breakfasts, any overplus being given at midday at the discretion of the teachers as an extra meal to children who would otherwise go dinnerless.<sup>1</sup>

(ii) *The Dietary.*

Taking into consideration the fact that with a large number of elementary school children bread and tea form the chief elements in the home diet, it is of the greatest importance that the school meal should be planned so as to contain a good proportion of the ingredients which are lacking at home.

Whatever views may be held as to the amount of proteid food that is necessary for adults, it is not disputed that in the case of children the more expensive forms are necessary because the growth of the body depends entirely upon the proteids. "It is impossible," declares the School Medical Officer of the London County Council, "to cut down proteids to the same extent in children as in adults without serious results. . . . To set out, therefore, to relieve underfeeding by a single meal a day, it is necessary to concentrate attention upon proteids and fats . . . and, therefore, a dinner for necessitous children must be necessarily more costly than for those properly fed in institutions or in their own homes. The want of clothing, which often accompanies underfeeding, also necessitates more expensive feeding in relief, the loss of bodily heat to be made up being greater

attached to the actual figures; the school attendance officers enquired into fifty-four of the cases taken at random and found that all but two showed undoubted poverty in the home. (Report of Bootle School Canteen Committee, 1910-11, pp. 10-11.)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. This is the plan still pursued (see post, pp. 86-87).



than in the case of the child in an industrial school or workhouse, who is warmly clad, and who, moreover, spends much time in a properly heated playroom or dormitory.”<sup>1</sup>

Few Local Authorities have so planned their dietary as to contain this excess of proteid and fat over starchy food. “Judged by this standard,” declared Dr. Kerr in 1908, and the same statement holds good to-day, “most diets supplied by public funds are probably wanting in value for the children, however useful they might be as a single meal for a normal individual.”<sup>2</sup>

It would naturally be expected that the School Medical Officer would be consulted about the dietary as a matter of course,<sup>3</sup> but this is by no means invariably the case. At Birkenhead, for instance, the School Medical Officer has no voice in the planning of the menu. At Stoke-on-Trent the School Medical Officer reports in 1911 that, “with the exception of the Fenton district, the medical staff does not appear to have even been consulted on the matter of dietary.”<sup>4</sup>

Where the meals are given at restaurants, the dietary

<sup>1</sup> London County Council, Report of the Medical Officer (Education) to Sub-Committee on Underfed Children, 1909. See also “School Feeding,” by Dr. John Lambert, in *Medical Examination of Schools and Scholars*, edited by T. N. Kelynack, M.D., 1910, pp. 240-242.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Education Committee of the London County Council, submitting report of the Medical Officer (Education) for the twenty-one months ending December 31, 1908, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> “The determination of the dietary of the children generally, and of individual children whose health or age renders it desirable that special arrangements should be made in their case” is, as the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education points out, a matter “on which the School Medical Officer is particularly competent to form an opinion, and on which, therefore, his opinion should be sought by the Authority.” (Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 275.)

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report of the School Medical Officer for Stoke-on-Trent for 1911, p. 56.

is almost invariably unsatisfactory, adequate inspection being impossible.<sup>1</sup>

The most elaborate dietary is probably that adopted by the Bradford Education Committee. In 1907, after the Education Committee had adopted the Provision of Meals Act, but before arrangements had been made to feed the children out of the rates, an experiment was made in feeding forty children for fourteen weeks. The dietary was carefully planned so that, while containing the requisite amount of proteid and fat, it should not be beyond the purse of the ordinary parent in normal times.<sup>2</sup> This dietary is still in force, a few alterations having been made which experience showed to be advisable. The menu is varied, according to the season, winter, summer, and spring or autumn. The same meal is not repeated for four weeks.<sup>3</sup> At Portsmouth again, where the dietary is drawn up by the Medical Officer of Health and the School Medical Officer, a different meal is given every day for three weeks.<sup>4</sup> In most towns, however, the same menu is continued week after week, with some slight variation in the summer. The same meal is given on the same day in the week so that the children learn to know what meal to expect, and in consequence the attendance is often considerably smaller on days when the dish is unpopular. Sometimes the food will vary very little even from day to day. Though served under various names, soup, stew or hash, it is really almost precisely the same. Some authorities

<sup>1</sup> See the descriptions of Stoke and Liverpool, post, pp. 89, 90-91.

<sup>2</sup> See Bradford Education Committee, Report on a Course of Meals given to Necessitous Children from April to July, 1907, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> For Bradford and some other typical menus see Appendix I.

<sup>4</sup> "The Importance of a Well-Advised and Comprehensive Scheme in the Selection of Children . . . under the Education (Provision of Meals) Act," by Victor J. Blake, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, p. 24.

supply only one course, others two. In some towns a child is allowed to have as much as it wants, in reason ; in other towns only one helping is allowed as a rule, though, if there happens to be any food over, this may be distributed among the children.<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally special provision is made for the infants. Thus, at York, milk and bread is given in the middle of the morning to infants who are on the feeding list, it having been found that they could not digest the ordinary dinners. But as a rule, though in well managed centres the infants are placed together at special tables, so that they can be better supervised and taught how to eat, there is no separate dietary for them.

Where only breakfasts are provided there is, of course, less room for variation. Generally cocoa or coffee is given, with bread and butter, margarine, dripping, jam or syrup. At Bootle pea soup is given one day a week. In several towns porridge is provided, either alternately with the cocoa or coffee breakfast, or every day. At Sheffield, where a cocoa breakfast used to be given, porridge was substituted at one school as an experiment ; it was found that the boys who were fed on porridge increased in weight at double the rate of the boys who received only the cocoa breakfast ; as a result porridge breakfasts were substituted in all the schools.<sup>2</sup>

*(iii) Preparation and Distribution of the Meals.*

In a few cases the Local Education Authority has equipped a kitchen for the preparation of the food, and

<sup>1</sup> At one centre that we visited, the second helping consisted only of what was left by some of the children on their plates ! Those who wanted more were asked to hold up their hands, and the food was then handed to them, the recipients being apparently selected at random, since there was not enough for all.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Chief School Medical Officer for Sheffield, for the year 1910, pp. 26, 27. See post, p. 190.

makes arrangements for distributing it to the various centres. At Bradford all the meals, with the exception of those for schools in outlying districts where arrangements are made with local caterers, are cooked at a central kitchen and distributed in special heat-retaining boxes to the different dining centres by motor vans. Manchester, Birkenhead and other towns also have their own central kitchen. Sometimes, as at West Ham, a kitchen is attached to each of the centres ; or occasionally a cookery centre is utilised for the preparation of the meals. Sometimes, as at Leeds and Portsmouth,<sup>1</sup> the Local Education Authority provides the kitchen and a caterer prepares the food. Frequently, however, all the arrangements for the preparation and the distribution of the meals are in the hands of caterers.

(iv) *The Service of the Meals.*

From the first great stress was laid by the Board of Education upon the educational aspect of the meals. "The methods employed in the provision of meals should be not merely such as will secure an improvement in the physical condition of the children, but such as will have a directly educational effect upon them in respect of manners and conduct."<sup>2</sup> "The school dinner may . . . be made to serve as a valuable object-lesson and used to reinforce the practical instruction in hygiene, cookery and domestic economy."<sup>3</sup>

In many cases this advice was totally disregarded.

<sup>1</sup> "The Importance of a Well-Advised and Comprehensive Scheme in the Selection of Children . . . under the Education (Provision of Meals) Act," by Victor J. Blake, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Board of Education, Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools in England, 1908, p. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, prefatory note by L. A. Selby-Bigge, p. 6.

The second report on the working of the Act contains many examples of the utter lack of discipline prevailing in some centres. In one case "no attempt to teach orderly eating was made; there was a certain amount of actual disorderly conduct, throwing bits of food at each other and so forth." In another case where the meals were served in a small outhouse in the playground, the "table was a low locker. . . . On this a newspaper was spread, and there was hardly room for more than six children to sit round it. Other children sat on low benches where they could, holding their bowls on their knees . . . about fifty partake of the dinner, but there is not room for more than twelve at a time, and then it is a scramble. . . . The food (Irish stew and bread) was good but everything else was as bad as could be." At another centre, we read, "the dinner is eaten in a perfect pandemonium of noise. Nine charwomen of a rather low type attend to about 470 children."<sup>1</sup>

It is encouraging to note that there has since been, generally speaking, an improvement in the service of the meals. But "there are still areas in which the educational possibilities of the meals have not been realised, or, if realised, have not received the attention which they deserve"<sup>2</sup>—a statement which we can amply corroborate.

The different methods in vogue may be classified roughly under four heads, according to the place in which the meal is served, *i.e.* (a) in the school, (b) in eating-houses, (c) in "centres," or (d) in the home.

(a) The ideal place for the meal is the school when a room is specially set apart as a dining-room. The meal should be attended only by the children from that partic-

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act for the year ended March 31, 1910, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, pp. 278, 279.

ular school and should be served under proper supervision. The tables should be nicely laid, regard being paid to the æsthetic side of the meal, and table manners should be taught. The children should themselves lay the tables and wait on one another. We have found these ideal arrangements in some of the Special Schools for Defective Children and in Open Air Schools,<sup>1</sup> but it is very rare to find such provision made for the "necessitous" children in the ordinary elementary schools. Many authorities, indeed, adopt the plan of serving the meals in the schools, but too frequently class-rooms are utilised. The objections to this course are obvious. Adequate ventilation after a meal is often impossible, and the smell of food pervades the atmosphere. It is frequently necessary to hurry over the meal so that the room may be prepared in time for school. The food is often served on the desks, an uncomfortable arrangement and one which renders it very difficult to teach the children to eat nicely.

The worst example of this utilisation of the school premises that we have seen is that of Bootle. Here the arrangements made for supplying the meals show a deplorable lack of appreciation, on the part of the Education Authority, of the benefits which may be derived from the Provision of Meals Act. The breakfasts are served sometimes in class-rooms, sometimes in the cloak-rooms or the cellars! When we visited Bootle (in April, 1913) the breakfasts had been stopped for the summer, but we were shown one or two of these cellars. We were told that they are made as inviting as possible—the walls are whitewashed, sawdust is sprinkled on the floors, a table is placed for the children to sit down to—but when all is done that can be done they remain

<sup>1</sup> We describe two or three of these schools later. (See post, pp. 121-2.)

entirely unsuitable places for the purpose. The only point that is urged in their favour is that the children enjoy the warmth from the heating apparatus. In the cloak-rooms there is not always room for a table, and the children sometimes have to sit along the walls, holding their mugs of cocoa or their basins of soup on their knees. When the class-rooms are utilised the food has to be placed on the desks; nothing in the nature of table-cloths is provided, and the state of the desks after the children, the infants especially, have eaten soup or bread and syrup, can be well imagined. Often the breakfasts arrive late, and the children have consequently to be hurried over the meal so that the class-rooms may be got ready for school.<sup>1</sup> It must not be assumed that nothing in the way of table manners is attempted; clean hands, for instance, can be insisted on (though even this is difficult in some schools where there is an insufficient supply of water), and at one school we were told that the infants had learnt to eat without spilling their food; but it is obvious that very little can be done. The method of serving the midday meal is even less "educational." We have seen that the Education Committee refused to make arrangements for the provision of a suitable dinner, and decided instead that the teachers should distribute at midday to the most necessitous children any surplus left over from breakfast. The dinner thus consists usually of merely a piece of bread, with perhaps some cocoa, if any remains from the morning meal. The bread is given to the children to take away, and they eat it on their way

<sup>1</sup> At Birmingham we note the same defect. "The children are quiet and well-behaved; but all the time is taken in serving the food, and there is no opportunity to teach individual children to eat slowly. The tendency, especially with the cocoa breakfast, is to gulp down the drink, eat part of the bread and jam, and carry the rest away." (*The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, by Phyllis D. Winder, 1913, p. 42.)

home. What renders the failure of the Education Authority to pay any regard to the educational aspect of the meal more disastrous is that it is the teachers who supervise the meals. Many of them bitterly resent the way in which the meals are served ; as one pointed out to us, the girls are taught in the school how to set a table, but the practical example which the teachers are forced to show will have much more weight than any theoretical teaching. A year ago the head teachers presented a memorial to the Education Committee, urging that the schools should no longer be used. As "a temporary expedient," runs the communication, they "have loyally endeavoured to work this imperfect system, but they now feel that the time has arrived for the adoption of a scheme on a more satisfactory and permanent basis. . . . The serving of meals in cloak-rooms, cellars or basements, and other unsuitable places, calls for immediate remedy. In some cases the children receive their meals whilst sitting upon the floor ; in all, the bread is of necessity placed upon the dirty desks. In others, there is no adequate supply of hot water and towels for use in cleansing the utensils. Under such conditions there can be no training in habits of decency or cleanliness. . . . When the meals are served in class-rooms, the desks and floors are rendered unfit for immediate school use, and a smell of food permeates the atmosphere. To combat this state of affairs as far as possible, the teachers have, in many cases, to wash the desks and brush the floors. In other cases, the children are hurried over their meals in order that the necessary preparations for lessons may be made." <sup>1</sup> To this the Education Committee replied that, while they agreed "that an ideal system of feeding the children would be by properly equipped centres quite apart from

<sup>1</sup> Report of Bootle School Canteen Committee, 1911-12, p. 10.



the school premises, the cost of such would be prohibitory, and that quite possibly the pressing of such a change would jeopardise the continuance of the exercise of the powers given by the Provision of Meals Act, now so beneficially and economically administered." The committee hoped "that the teachers will recognise the Authority's financial difficulties in the way of the introduction of a more desirable system, and, pending the arrival of the long-expected parliamentary aid for this and other ameliorative work devolving upon local education authorities, will continue their valuable co-operation in meeting the needs of their hungry scholars by the existing practical if not perfect system."<sup>1</sup> The teachers had apparently been considering the advisability of withdrawing their services altogether, but this threat of a possible cessation of the meals induced them to continue their assistance.

(b) A second method is the service of the meals at local restaurants. This plan is strongly discouraged by the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, since it is impossible to secure adequate supervision of the meals or proper control of the dietary; "the meals are consequently of little, if any, value from an educational or even nutritional point of view."<sup>2</sup> Any authority adopting this system is, in fact, animated solely by the desire to get the children fed with the least possible trouble.

Unfortunately the plan is still in favour with a considerable number of local authorities,<sup>3</sup> even in some of the large towns.

Thus at Stoke-on-Trent the children for whom free

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> In many towns where meals are usually served at centres, local restaurants are utilised in outlying districts where the number of children is too small to allow of a centre being established.

meals are granted are sent to eating-houses.<sup>1</sup> These houses are often, if not always, small bakers' shops, not general restaurants. They are usually situated at an easy distance from the school. The numbers attending each are small, amounting to not more than twenty or so. At the one we visited<sup>2</sup> the conditions seemed to be as good as could be expected under the circumstances ; the caterer was a motherly old woman who took an evident interest in the children, and the food was hot and palatable. The disadvantages inherent in the system, the impossibility of supervision and the lack of control over the dietary, are, however, observable here as elsewhere. Probably in few cases would the children get an insufficiency of food. The difficulty lies rather in securing good quality and the proper kind of meal. Thus it was found that one caterer had substituted, for the regulation fish pie, bread and jam, because the children preferred it. "I have inspected several of these [eating-houses]," reports the School Medical Officer, "and although I found one instance in which the children were treated on exactly the same lines as the contractor's own children, in fact sat at the same table, and were regarded quite as members of the family ; in most instances the surroundings, the manner of serving and the dietary left much to be desired. . . . I would strongly urge the advisability of getting the catering in all instances into our own hands. I do not think that the full benefit of the Act can be secured in any other way ; it is doubtful, as things are, whether the intention of the Act, as a remedy for malnutrition, can be carried out at all." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At one school, the children have the meal in the school, the food being sent in by a caterer, the head-mistress preferring that arrangement.

<sup>2</sup> In April, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report of the School Medical Officer for Stoke-on-Trent, 1912, p. 23.

At Acton the meals are given at a dingy eating-house which is intended primarily to serve the needs of the women working at the laundries in the district.<sup>1</sup> There is only one room, so that the children have to have their meals with the other customers, and the hour at which the children come in, between twelve and one, is, of course, the busy hour for the restaurant. At one time a rota of ladies attended voluntarily to supervise the meals, but this plan has been given up; the School Attendance Officers now take it in turn to be present. The children come and go as they please and there is no attempt to teach table manners.

At Liverpool, till quite recently, the same system was in force. The children received coupons at the school, which they presented at various cocoa rooms in the city.<sup>2</sup> The objections to this system were many. The number of cocoa rooms, at which coupons were accepted, was limited, and in some cases the nearest cocoa room was situated too far from the school for the children to be sent there.<sup>3</sup> Though some managers refused to supply unsuitable food, others gave whatever the children asked for—frequently buns, jam puffs, or iced cakes.<sup>4</sup> Often the children would take the food home

<sup>1</sup> This eating-house is situated in the poorest part of Acton, where the great majority of the children who are on the dinner-list live. In a few cases, where the children live in other districts, arrangements are made for them to obtain food at the cookery centres; this food they take home with them. This plan, we were told, is only adopted in cases where the mother can be trusted to see that the dinners are really eaten by the children for whom they are intended.

<sup>2</sup> Some were sent to the depôts of the Food and Betterment Association.

<sup>3</sup> Interim Report of the Special Committee appointed to investigate the Insufficient or Improper Feeding of School Children, Liverpool City Council Proceedings, 1907-8, Vol. II., pp. 5, 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12, 19.

to be shared among the other members of the family.<sup>1</sup> At some cocoa rooms the children were served in the general room, and were brought into contact with adult customers "of a class not choice in language or manners." There was little or no supervision—only occasional visits by the teachers—and consequently no attempt "to influence the children in the direction of cleanliness and orderliness at meals."<sup>2</sup> In spite of these revelations the system was continued for several years, being only finally given up in August, 1912. The meals are now served in centres. The food is at present supplied by caterers, but the Education Committee are considering the advisability of providing their own kitchen.

(c) The plan most usually adopted, and the one recommended by the Board of Education, is the system of serving the meals at centres attended by children from three or four neighbouring schools. For this purpose some room belonging to the Corporation may be utilised, perhaps a room attached to the Police Station, as often at Manchester, or a room in some disused school; frequently the hall of a club or mission is hired. The arrangements are often of a makeshift character, the room being ill-adapted for the purpose and the surroundings dark and dreary. Moreover, the assembling of large numbers of children from different schools renders the work of supervision more difficult and detracts considerably from the educational value of the meal.

The actual conditions vary widely from town to town, and even from centre to centre in the same town.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 22, 23, 24. In one case where five coupons were given daily to five members of a family, it was found that the children took the coupons home every day, and at the end of the week these coupons were presented and value obtained. (*Ibid.*, p. 21.)

<sup>2</sup> MS. Memorandum on the Feeding of School Children, by the Liverpool Fabian Society, 1908.

The best results are perhaps to be seen at Bradford,<sup>1</sup> the town in which most attention has been paid to the subject. Here the teachers supervise the meal, two or three being present generally, one to apportion the food and the others to supervise the table manners of the children. They are assisted by boy and girl monitors. These are selected generally from the elder children on the dinner list.<sup>2</sup> On arrival, about ten minutes before the meal, each monitor puts on one of the blue overalls provided for them, sets the table for which he or she is responsible and hands round the food. The position of monitor is a much coveted one. The system provides a valuable training for the children in doing things for themselves, and in looking after one another. The results are most marked. In every centre we visited the children were quiet and orderly, and in some cases the behaviour was excellent. At one centre we were particularly struck by the table manners of the boys, their consideration for one another, and the quick and quiet way in which they collected all the plates and spoons and packed them in the boxes for return to the cooking depot of their own accord, without any instructions from the teacher in charge. The results vary, of course, in different centres. For instance, with regard to clean hands and faces, some teachers are very strict, each child having to hold up his hands for inspection as he enters the dining-room. In others only periodical inspection is made, and we noticed several dirty hands, notably in the case of some of the boys who were assisting to hand round the food. Infants are placed at separate tables so that they can receive special attention. Each child is expected to eat the first course, or at any rate to try to eat it,

<sup>1</sup> The centres at Bradford, Leeds, West Ham and Birkenhead were all visited in the spring of 1913 and the descriptions refer to that date.

<sup>2</sup> In the secondary schools, the poorer children are allowed to act as monitors, being given in return a 3d. dinner free.

before being given the second. When the child does not like the food, it is given a small helping at first and coaxed to eat it. Over and over again we were told that at first the children would hardly touch the food, being accustomed to the home dietary of bread and tea and pickles ; but by the patient endeavours of the teachers this difficulty was overcome and the children have learnt to appreciate nourishing food. The importance of the æsthetic side of the meal is fully appreciated. Table cloths are provided and often flowers. The meal, indeed, "from start to finish is educational." <sup>1</sup>

At Leeds it struck us that the chief aim was merely to feed the children, the educational side receiving only secondary consideration. As most of the centres are not large enough to accommodate all the children at once (at any rate in winter time), two "sittings-down" are necessary, and the meal is hurried through so as to allow the second relay to come in as soon as possible. The children begin their meal as soon as they enter, without waiting till the others have come in so that all may begin together in an orderly manner. Grace is said halfway through the meal. As soon as a child has finished the first course (of which it is allowed to have a second helping, if desired), it is given a piece of cake or bun which it eats outside in the street. The supervision is undertaken by the teachers, but only for a day or two at a time. This constant change of supervisors makes the teaching of table manners more difficult. One of the regulations runs that "the supervisor should see that no child is admitted who has not clean hands and face," <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Bradford, 1909, pp. 100-1. At Nottingham the conditions are very similar to those at Bradford, the Education Committee having, in fact, modelled their policy on that of Bradford.

<sup>2</sup> Leeds Education Committee, Rules for the Management of Dining Centres.

but to judge from the very dirty state of some of the hands and faces we saw, this rule seems to be ignored, at any rate at some of the centres. No special provision is made for the infants; they have the same food and are placed at the same tables with the bigger children; in some cases the tables are so high that they have to kneel on the forms in order to reach their food, and the spoons provided are so large that it is difficult for them to eat without spilling it.<sup>1</sup> The condition of the rooms after the children have finished their dinner is anything but desirable, soup being spilled on the table and pieces dropped on the floor. Especially was this noticeable at one centre where the meal was served on desks. These desks were covered with dirty and ragged linoleum, and the whole surroundings were inexpressibly dreary, the litter of food on the floor at the end of the meal adding to the general squalor.

At West Ham some attempt is made to render the meal educational.<sup>2</sup> Monitors and monitresses are appointed from among the elder children to assist in waiting on the others. Table cloths are provided, and in some cases flowers are placed on the tables. But here again the meal is spoilt by the sense of rush. Since at each centre there may be twice or even perhaps three times as many children as can be accommodated at once, each child is given its dinner as soon as it comes in, and is dispatched as soon as it has finished. "Table manners,

<sup>1</sup> Complaints on both these points had, we were told, been made to the Education Committee, but, on the score of expense, nothing had been done.

<sup>2</sup> The meals are served at the schools in some room which is no longer needed for teaching purposes; in some cases, we believe, in a room which was specially built as a dining-room. We have included this example in the third class rather than in the first, since in each case the school serves as a centre for children from neighbouring schools.

personal appearance, good behaviour, and punctuality," are indeed, as the Superintendent of the Centres remarks, "not overlooked; but in these respects, the results are not as satisfactory as one could desire. The unusually large numbers of children attending the centres, and the limited time in which to serve the meals to enable the children to return in time for school, make it a difficult task to give the necessary individual attention."<sup>1</sup> At one time school managers and members of the Children's Care Committee took it in turn to attend the different centres and supervise the children, but this plan has been given up, and the supervision is now done solely by the women who prepare the meals.

Birkenhead affords a striking example of the varying conditions prevailing in different centres in the same town. In one case a dining-room has been specially built at the school, this dining-room serving as a centre for several other schools. No table cloths are used, but the tables are of white wood, well scrubbed; plants are sometimes provided, and the whole surroundings are bright and cheerful. The children were unfortunately allowed to come in as they liked, but in other respects the discipline seemed good. Table manners were inculcated and clean hands insisted on. Food had to be finished at table and might not be taken away. At another centre the conditions were entirely different. The meals were served in a corridor at the public baths. Two long narrow tables were placed against each wall, with forms on one side; on the other side, owing to the narrowness of the corridor, there was no room for seats, so that some of the children had to stand. The children entered and left as they liked, and were allowed to take away food with them. Little effort was made to teach table manners,

<sup>1</sup> Report of the West Ham Education Committee for the year ended March 31, 1912, p. 52.



indeed it would have been impossible to do much in this respect owing to the unsuitable character of the premises. It would perhaps be unfair to dwell too much on the conditions prevailing in this centre, since the use of these premises was admittedly a temporary expedient (though we understood they had been used for some time), but the conditions at a third centre were not very much better. The hall was large, it is true, and there was plenty of room for the children, but the surroundings were very dreary. The tables, which were not covered with tablecloths, were dark and dingy. Here again the children were allowed to straggle in as they pleased, some as much as half an hour or forty minutes late. They left as soon as they had finished, frequently carrying away food with them unchecked. Little attention was paid to table manners and much of the food was wasted.

(d) The three methods which we have described all present one feature in common. The children, whether fed at the schools, at eating-houses or at centres, all share with their schoolfellows in a common meal. There remains one other method, the supply of food to the family for consumption at home. This is the method adopted at Leicester and, so far as we know, in this town only. As we have already pointed out, no rate is levied at Leicester, voluntary funds being declared to be sufficient. These funds are administered by the Children's Aid Association, a body composed largely of members of the Charity Organisation Society and imbued with its spirit. The Association proceeds on the theory that the provision of meals is simply a form of relief; this being so, the relief should be adequate, and the family as a whole should be dealt with. The food is accordingly distributed in the homes,<sup>1</sup> sufficient being supplied

<sup>1</sup> Where the home conditions are extremely bad, provision is made for children to be fed at eating-houses, but such cases are

for all the family, not only for those attending school, and it is given every day, including Sundays, throughout the year. Milk being the chief article absent from the dietary of the poor, the food chosen is bread and milk. This is delivered by the ordinary baker and milkman so that the neighbours should not know that the family is receiving relief (though as a matter of fact the "bread and milk" families appear to be well known).

Certain advantages have undoubtedly accrued from this system. The parents have learnt the value of milk, and the children have been taught to take it. At first there was often much difficulty in this latter respect, but by constant visitation the children's prejudice has been broken down, and they now relish the food.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, under this method of distributing the food in the homes the advantages to be derived from a common meal are totally ignored. No provision is made to meet the case where the mother goes out to work all day, and where the provision of a midday meal at school would be of great value. Moreover, though frequent visits are paid to the homes at breakfast-time to see that the children are actually getting the food intended for them, it is impossible to ensure this in all cases.

We have classified the different methods under the above four headings according to the place where the meal is served, but, as will have been seen by the examples given, the educational value of the meal is determined even more by the character of the supervision than by the nature of the surroundings.

The supervision is frequently undertaken by the

very rare. At the time of our visit, in July, 1913, there was not one such case.

<sup>1</sup>Second Quarterly Report of the Children's Aid Association, November, 1907, to February, 1908, p. 3.

teachers. In 1909, the Board of Education reports that the "assistance of teachers has been the rule rather than the exception."<sup>1</sup> This service is always rendered voluntarily, though occasionally, as at Bradford, the teachers receive some small remuneration.<sup>2</sup> The amount of service given varies widely in different towns. At Bradford the same teacher will attend the centre daily for months. In other towns his or her turn may come quite infrequently, and may only amount to two or three days' service at a time.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes School Managers, members of the Canteen Committee or voluntary workers take it in turn to assist in the supervision, but their attendance is generally spasmodic. At Portsmouth the centres are entirely in charge of ladies who give their services voluntarily.<sup>4</sup> As a rule, however, paid superintendents are appointed, too often women of the caretaker type. In some towns the School Attendance Officer attends to collect the tickets and helps to maintain order.

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> The head teachers receive 5s. a week for supervising dinners, and 2s. 6d. for breakfasts; the assistant teachers 4s. and 2s. respectively. At Derby also the teachers are paid. (Report of the School Medical Officer for Derby, 1911, p. 61.) This payment is very exceptional.

<sup>3</sup> At Leeds, for instance, the teacher will perhaps be called on for a day or two every two months. At Liverpool a teacher is supposed to attend once a fortnight, but often no teacher at all is present. At Bootle the turn may be one day a week or a fortnight, or perhaps a week at a time; here the teachers, we were informed, voluntarily give their services "under protest," a fact which, when one considers the conditions under which they are asked to serve the meals, is not surprising.

<sup>4</sup> "The Importance of a Well-Advised and Comprehensive Scheme in the Selection of Children . . . under the Education (Provision of Meals) Act," by Victor J. Blake, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, p. 24.

The question how far the teachers should be asked to give their services is a vexed one. On the one hand, where the teacher attends regularly—and regular attendance is essential if the full benefit from the meals is to be derived—this extra work involves a great strain. Especially when the midday interval is only from 12 to 1.30, as in many provincial towns, the time for rest is seriously curtailed. At Leeds “a reasonable time is allowed the teachers in charge for their own midday meal,” and they are allowed to arrive late at afternoon school in consequence of this,<sup>1</sup> but we were told that this permission is not in practice taken advantage of, as their late arrival would dislocate the work. Moreover, although the service is supposed to be always entirely voluntary on the part of the teachers, there is always the danger that they may feel under a moral obligation to offer their services. In some cases, the burden seems to fall unduly on a few, only a small minority offering to assist in the supervision, the others taking no share.

On the other hand, “it is unquestionable that where the teachers are willing to undertake the work, they are, generally speaking, the most competent supervisors. The reason for this is not far to seek. The children, being accustomed to obey the commands of their teachers, are more ready to behave in an orderly and disciplined manner when under their supervision than when a stranger is in charge. Moreover, the teachers’ acquaintance with the idiosyncrasies of individual children enables them to keep an eye on those children who are specially in need of food or who need persuasion to make them eat

<sup>1</sup> Leeds Education Committee, Rules for the Management of Dinner Centres. At Bradford it is noticeable that it is as a general rule the men teachers who supervise the meals; women teachers assist, but the responsibility for the management of the whole centre seems to involve too great a strain upon them.

the wholesome food provided.”<sup>1</sup> Again, the fact that the teachers are present connects the meal in the child’s mind with the school, and so tends to make it more a part of the school curriculum, a lesson in table manners. Without the teacher, Miss McMillan points out, “the whole venture will fail miserably on the educational side.” But it is a mistake to ask the teachers to serve the food and wait on the children. Their function should be “to preside and to be the head, and as far as possible the soul, of the daily gathering,”<sup>2</sup> just as at dinner in a secondary school.

To sum up now the main characteristics of the present methods of serving the meals, it will be seen that, generally speaking, the conditions are very far from satisfactory. Even where the Local Education Authority draws up elaborate regulations for the management of the dining-centres, these regulations are frequently disregarded in practice by the supervisors. Too often the object is to get the meal over as quickly as possible, and inadequate attention is paid to the inculcation of table manners and the little amenities of a civilised meal. To expedite the service the food is frequently placed on the table before the children come in, and it is nearly cold before they eat it. Sometimes the second course is served and placed in front of the child before it has finished the first course. The food is almost invariably such as can be eaten with a spoon and fork, and the children are thus not taught the use of a knife.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> *London’s Children : How to Feed Them and How not to Feed Them*, by Margaret McMillan and A. Cobden-Sanderson, 1909, p. 11. We have met with this ideal arrangement only at one school—a small “special” school for feeble-minded children at Bradford (see post, pp. 121-2.).

<sup>3</sup> Knives were used at Bradford for a time, but were given up, as it was found that the children hurt themselves. Their use

Sometimes only a spoon is provided and the help of fingers is almost unavoidable. We have as a rule found the supply of utensils fairly adequate, though where water is given it is not always the case for each child to have a separate mug.<sup>1</sup> It is rare to find any attempt at table decoration, and table-cloths are by no means universal. It may be objected that table cloths are expensive and, if the tables are kept thoroughly clean, unnecessary, but to keep the tables well scrubbed costs as much as to provide table cloths and the necessity of keeping the cloth clean is a useful lesson to the child. Sometimes the food, if of the bread and jam nature, is placed on the table without plates. In very few cases has the system of utilising the services of the elder children been adopted with any thoroughness, and the valuable opportunity of training thus offered is lost.

(e)—*The Provision of Meals during the Holidays*

At the time the Act of 1906 was passed, it appears to have been generally taken for granted that it empowered Local Education Authorities to provide meals during holidays as well as during school time.<sup>2</sup> The circular issued by the Board of Education, asking the Local Authorities for information as to the way in which

demands, of course, much supervision, but they might be given to the elder children at any rate.

<sup>1</sup> At Birmingham "in one school the same mugs [for cocoa] were used twice over for different children without being washed. The supply of utensils at several of the schools was too small for the numbers fed." (*The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, by Phyllis D. Winder, 1913, p. 43.)

<sup>2</sup> See preamble to the Education (Provision of Meals) Act Amendment Bill, July 20, 1910. "This Bill introduces no new principle, but simply extends the Act to render permissible the continued operation of the Act during the holidays, a point which, when the original Act was passing through Parliament, it was generally thought was covered."

the Act had been administered, contained a question as to the number of children who were fed during the school holidays, thus assuming that the meals would be continued; nowhere was it pointed out that the cost of the meals so provided could not be borne by the rates.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, during the next two or three years, the accounts of several Local Authorities, who continued the meals during the holidays, were certified by the Local Government Board Auditors.<sup>2</sup> About 1909, however, the question was raised whether Local Authorities could legally spend the rates on providing meals when the children were not actually in school. The Local Government Board, on being appealed to by the Newcastle-on-Tyne Education Authority, replied that they could not concur in any interpretation of the Act which would empower the authority to incur expenditure when the closing of the schools precluded the children's attendance.<sup>3</sup> In August, 1909, the cost of feeding children during the previous Christmas holidays was disallowed by the Auditor in the accounts of the West Ham Authority. The Local Government Board, on appeal, confirmed the disallowance, though they remitted the surcharge.<sup>4</sup>

Since this date, in the great majority of towns where meals are continued during the holidays,<sup>5</sup> the cost is

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, up to March 31, 1909, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Hansard*, July 12, 1910, 5th Series, Vol. 19, pp. 189-190. In 1910, out of the twenty-five or so Local Authorities who continued the meals during the holidays, about one-fifth paid for them out of the rates. (Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, p. 255.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254-5; Report of West Ham Education Committee for the year ended March 31, 1910, pp. 45-6.

<sup>5</sup> The first report which was issued on the Working of the Provision of Meals Act gave the number of authorities who continued the meals during the school holidays—at that date 3 out of the 7 counties, and 32 out of the 105 county boroughs, boroughs

met by voluntary funds. Sometimes the Local Education Authority will issue a special appeal for funds. Or the arrangements may be undertaken by some voluntary society or by philanthropic individuals. Where no provision is made officially, the teachers sometimes make arrangements privately for the most necessitous children to be fed at shops. At Leeds it has become the custom for the Lord Mayor to provide out of his own purse meals during the Christmas holidays (the meals being discontinued during the other holidays); the cost of this provision may amount to as much as £500.

In one or two towns the charge has been met year after year out of public funds. At Bradford, for example, the meals have from the first been continued during school holidays.<sup>1</sup> The expenditure has been surcharged regularly by the Local Government Board Auditor, but, as we have said, it has been met out of a grant voted by the Finance Committee from the trading profits of the Corporation. The Labour Councillors maintain that when the Act was passed holiday feeding was considered legal and the ratepayers generally seem to uphold them in this claim, in spite of occasional protests.<sup>2</sup> At Nottingham the same plan is pursued.<sup>3</sup> At Portsmouth a grant is made to the Mayor on the tacit understanding that

and urban districts, who were making some provision under the Act (Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, up to March 31, 1909, pp. 34-38). No figures are now available.

<sup>1</sup> Report of Bradford Education Committee for the year ended March 31, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> See letter from Bradford Ratepayers Association, in Bradford City Council Proceedings, August 10, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> In London, during the Christmas holidays, 1911-12, meals were provided out of a sum placed at the disposal of the Chairman of the Council by the General Purposes Committee, from the balance of the account in connection with the erection and management of the Coronation Procession stands. (Minutes of the London County Council, February 13, 1912, p. 2791.)



he will use it for the provision of meals during the holidays. At West Ham, after the Local Government Board auditor had, in 1909, disallowed the charge for holiday feeding, the cost was for a year or two borne by voluntary funds.<sup>1</sup> It became, however, increasingly difficult to raise the necessary subscriptions, and during 1911 £494 was charged to the rates, the voluntary subscriptions only amounting to £74.<sup>2</sup> During the following year recourse was again had to the rates. The Local Government Board Auditor surcharged the expenditure, but the Board, on appeal, remitted the surcharge, though confirming the Auditor's decision.<sup>3</sup> At Acton meals have been supplied regularly on Saturdays<sup>4</sup> and during the school holidays for the past few years without any question having been raised.

The question of the legality of the provision of meals during the holidays out of the rates is, indeed, an open one. The London County Council took counsel's opinion on the point in 1909 and again in 1910, each time receiving the reply that holiday feeding was illegal,<sup>5</sup> but the question has never been settled by a case in the courts. On special occasions the Local Government Board have relaxed their prohibition. Thus, in 1911, Mr. John Burns stated in Parliament that though the Board would not sanction in advance any expenditure incurred in providing

<sup>1</sup> Report of the West Ham Education Committee for the year ended March 31, 1910, p. 46; *Ibid.* for the year ended March 31, 1911, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* for the year ended March 31, 1912, pp. 50-1.

<sup>3</sup> The *East Ham Echo*, August 22, 1913.

<sup>4</sup> At Brighton meals were provided on Saturdays by the Local Education Authority out of the rates till January, 1909, when it was declared to be *ultra vires*. (Report on the Medical Inspection of School Children in Brighton for 1908, p. 99.)

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, February 2, 1909, p. 121; Minutes of the Education Committee, November 23, 1910, p. 991.

meals during the week the schools were closed on account of the Coronation festivities, they would be prepared to consider each case on its merits, and decide whether any surcharge that might be made should be remitted or upheld.<sup>1</sup> And in the spring of 1912, during the widespread distress caused by the coal strike, the Board sanctioned the provision of meals during the Easter holidays.

On several occasions Bills have been brought in by the Labour party to legalise the provision of meals during the holidays, the latest being in April, 1913.<sup>2</sup> So far these efforts have met with no success, though the Prime Minister declared in 1912 that the Government was favourable to the principle,<sup>3</sup> but it has now been promised that the forthcoming Education Bill shall contain a clause enabling Local Authorities to provide meals on Sundays and during holidays.<sup>4</sup>

There seems indeed to be a general consensus of opinion in favour of holiday feeding. The experiments made by Dr. Crowley at Bradford in 1907, and by the Medical Officer of Health at Northampton in 1909, which we shall describe later,<sup>5</sup> not to mention the testimony offered by numbers of teachers as to the deterioration of the children physically during the holidays, prove conclusively the need for the continuation of the meals, if the children are not to lose much of the benefit which they have derived during term time.

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, March 27, 1911, 5th Series, Vol. 23, pp. 1074-5.

<sup>2</sup> See Education (Administrative Provisions) Bills, April 14, 1910 (No. 128), February 19, 1912 (No. 18), April 15, 1913 (No. 101), which all contained a clause for provision of school meals during the holidays; Education (Provision of Meals) Act Amendment Bills, July 20, 1910 (No. 265); April 19, 1911 (No. 181); March 13, 1912 (No. 82); April 16, 1913 (No. 109).

<sup>3</sup> *Hansard*, March 28, 1912, 5th Series, Vol. 36, p. 598.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, July 22, 1913, Vol. 55, pp. 1910-11.

<sup>5</sup> See post, pp. 184-7.

In passing we may note that not only do many Local Authorities—how many we are unable to ascertain, but the number must be considerable—discontinue the meals during the holidays, but they stop them entirely during the summer months.<sup>1</sup> In some towns, where employment is good during the summer, there may be little need for school meals, but in large towns, such as Bootle and Salford, which contain a large population who rely on casual labour, it is obvious that the cessation of the meals during the summer must cause considerable hardship.

(f)—*The Provision for Paying Children and Recovery of the Cost.*

When the Provision of Meals Act was passed it was assumed that a considerable proportion of the cost of the meals would be borne by the parents. It was confidently expected that large numbers of parents would be willing to avail themselves of the provision of a midday meal at school for their children and would gladly pay for it.<sup>2</sup> The circular issued by the Board of Education to the Local Authorities pointed out that the Act aimed at securing that suitable meals should be available “just as much for those whose parents are in a position to pay as for those to whom food must be given free of cost.”<sup>3</sup> “There will generally be no difficulty in providing, where it is so desired, a school dinner at a fixed price in the middle of the day, attended by children for whom, by reason of

<sup>1</sup> This may be through lack of funds, as at East Ham (see ante, p. 56), but is not always due to this cause.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, *Hansard*, December 6, 1906, 4th Series, Vol. 166, p. 1283; December 7, 1906, pp. 1340, 1344. See also *ibid.*, July 9, 1903, Vol. 125, p. 196, and April 20, 1904, Vol. 133, p. 788.

<sup>3</sup> Report on Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, p. 41.

distance from the school or because the mother's absence makes a home meal difficult, the parent prefers to take advantage of an arrangement similar to that now in operation in most secondary day schools." <sup>1</sup> Moreover, little difficulty was anticipated in extracting payment from those parents who could afford to pay but neglected to do so. These expectations have not been fulfilled. In the year 1908-9 the sums received from the parents, either contributed voluntarily by them or recovered after prosecution or threat of prosecution, amounted to only £295, or .44 per cent. of the total receipts.<sup>2</sup> In 1911-12 the amount so received had increased but was still only 1 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

The smallness of the sums voluntarily contributed by the parents is largely due to the action of the Local Authorities. In the great majority of towns in England <sup>4</sup> no serious attempt has been made to establish "school restaurants"; the Local Education Authority, owing perhaps to lack of accommodation, perhaps to the difficulty of providing for a fluctuating number of children (a difficulty felt especially where the meals are supplied through a caterer), perhaps to the feeling that the provision of school meals as a matter of convenience would encourage the mothers to go out to work, has limited the provision to necessitous children. In 1911-12, out of 118 towns (apart from London) in which provision was made for underfed children, in only twenty-two were any of the meals paid for wholly by the parents. The number of children so paid for was in most cases negligible, the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> The amount was £1,570 out of a total of £157,127. (Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 332.)

<sup>4</sup> For provision made for paying children in Scottish towns, see Appendix II., pp. 242, 245, 246.

total amounting to only a few hundreds. And these figures include meals paid for under compulsion (though without prosecution) as well as meals voluntarily paid for as a matter of convenience.<sup>1</sup>

But even where the system of voluntary payment has been tried, it has been a failure. At Bradford, where a large proportion of married women work in the mills, it was felt that many parents would take advantage of a system by which they could obtain a midday meal for their children at cost price.<sup>2</sup> The Education Committee accordingly sent round a circular to the head teachers asking them to announce to their scholars that a good dinner could be obtained for 2d.<sup>3</sup> The response was disappointing. Comparatively few of the mothers took advantage of the offer, and the result, though the number of paying children<sup>4</sup> seems to be larger than in any other provincial town,<sup>5</sup> can only be described as a failure. This

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, pp. 325-7, 331. In eleven other towns the parents in some cases paid part of the cost.

<sup>2</sup> "The needs would be met of a host of children who never got a decent meal." (Councillor North, Bradford City Council Proceedings, February 26, 1907, p. 233.)

<sup>3</sup> Extracts from the Annual Reports of the Bradford Education Committee for the four years ended March 31, 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1910, pp. 14, 16. The charge is now 2½d.

<sup>4</sup> The numbers given in the Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911 (p. 325) are 182, but some of these were paid for by the Guardians. No record, we were told, is kept of the individual children who pay, but the amount received in 1912-13 from parents who voluntarily paid the whole cost was £169 19s. 8d. Thus only some 16,320 meals were wholly paid for, out of a total of 782,979. (Bradford Education Committee, Return as to the Working of the Provision of Meals Act for the year ending March 31, 1913.)

<sup>5</sup> At Finchley as many as two-thirds of the meals are paid for, but the charge is very low, only ½d. per meal. We were informed that the price would not cover the cost of food if it were not for the fact that the meat used in connection with the dinners was provided as a voluntary gift.

may be partly attributed to the cost. Where there are several children a payment of 2d. per head may be more than the parent can afford. But the main cause of failure is undoubtedly the dislike of the independent type of parent who can afford to pay to sending his children to meals the majority of which are being given free. In fact any system which seeks to combine free and paying meals, the free meals being the chief element, is foredoomed to failure.<sup>1</sup>

In the Special Schools for mentally or physically defective children, where the dinner is provided more as a part of the school curriculum than as a "charity" meal, there is not, as we shall see, much difficulty in inducing the parents to pay for the meals.<sup>2</sup> In rural districts also, where the children are in many cases unable to go home at midday, the system of paying dinners has more chance of success.<sup>3</sup>

Turning now to the question of the recovery of the cost from unwilling parents, the Provision of Meals Act, it will be remembered, laid down that the Local Authorities should require payment unless satisfied that the parents could not pay, and the cost might be recovered summarily as a civil debt. In practice this has been found very difficult to accomplish. It is impossible to tell from the returns how much of the £1,570 received from parents in

<sup>1</sup> This was the opinion of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding in 1905. (See ante, p. 37.) "If no distinction is made between the paying children and the non-paying children," declared one witness, "I feel sure that the Birmingham artisan would not send his children. He would not let them go to receive a meal in regard to which it was not known whether it was given free or not." (Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Vol. II., Q. 1246, evidence of Mr. George Hookham.) See also the evidence given by Mr. F. Wilkinson, the Director of Education for Bolton. (*Ibid.*, Qs. 3115-3119.)

<sup>2</sup> See post, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> See post, pp. 123-5.

1911-12 was contributed voluntarily, and how much recovered after compulsion, but the amount recovered must necessarily be very small.<sup>1</sup>

Where the Local Education Authority confines the provision of meals strictly to the cases where the family income is below a certain amount per head, as at Leeds, there is of course little to be recovered, attempts at recovery being limited to cases where the parents have made an incorrect statement as to their income, and have therefore been obtaining the meals under false pretences. At West Ham, indeed, the Education Committee has interpreted the Provision of Meals Act to mean that recovery must be attempted in every case where meals are supplied. When a parent applies for meals for his children on the score of being unable to provide for them himself—for only necessitous children are fed, no provision being made for voluntary payment—he has to sign a form by which he agrees to repay the cost of all meals which have been supplied when he gets back into work and can afford to do so. Moreover, he has to send a note every day saying that he still wishes his children to be fed,<sup>2</sup> this being insisted on as a proof that meals have been supplied in the event of an attempt at recovery. In any case the full cost is rarely charged, the wage and the number of children being taken into consideration, and a rebate of sometimes as much as 75 per cent. being granted. But as a matter of fact very few accounts are sent to the Borough Treasurer for collection, as the wages of nearly all the parents of the children who are fed, even

<sup>1</sup> The amount recovered *after prosecution* in 1911-12 was £42 10s. 6d. for the whole of England and Wales, London accounting for more than half this sum. (Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, pp. 325-7.) To this we must add the amount recovered with more or less difficulty, but without prosecution.

<sup>2</sup> See ante, p. 64.

when they are in good work, are too small to allow of their paying for meals supplied in the past.<sup>1</sup>

When the Local Education Authority is determined to provide food for all children who need it, for those who are underfed through the neglect of their parents to provide for them as well as for those whose parents are too poor to do so, a considerable amount ought to be recovered. The difficulty lies in the impossibility in many cases of securing sufficient evidence of the parent's ability to pay. Magistrates are notoriously loth to convict. At Bradford we were told that in numbers of cases magistrates' orders for payment had been served on the parents, but these orders were frequently disregarded by parents who knew the practical difficulties in the way of enforcing them.<sup>2</sup>

Whether the amount due for meals which have been already supplied is paid by the parent or not, the commonest result of sending a notice that the Local Authority intends to recover the cost is that the parents refuse to allow their children any longer to receive the meals. "In practice it is found," says the Bootle School Canteen Committee, "that when action is taken to enforce payment the children are withdrawn by their parents from further participation in the meals, with the result that the children revert to their former ill-fed condition."<sup>3</sup> At York, too, we were told that when a child who is found to be underfed through neglect is put on the feeding-list and a letter written to the father that he will be charged

<sup>1</sup> Report of the West Ham Education Committee for the year ending March 31, 1912, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> In 1911 proceedings were taken against parents in only eight towns, including London. The number of cases was 219, of which 147 were in London. (Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, pp. 325-327.)

<sup>3</sup> Report on the work of the Bootle School Canteen Committee, 1910-11, p. 21. Since this date the Committee have accordingly made no attempt to prosecute parents for repayment of the cost.



the cost of the meals, he invariably writes back demanding that his child shall be taken off the list. Nothing more is done and the child remains underfed. The Local Education Authorities are, indeed, "on the horns of a dilemma in dealing with such cases, as the Act obliges them to make this attempt to recover the cost, and they know that the only result of their doing so will be that the children are withdrawn from the meals."<sup>1</sup> So much has the Bradford Education Authority felt this difficulty that they have more than once sought power, by inserting a clause in the local Bills promoted by the Corporation, to compel the attendance of children at meals in all cases in which the School Medical Officer certifies that the children are underfed, and to recover the cost. These efforts have so far proved useless, it being held that such a clause involves a new principle and cannot therefore be included in a local Act.<sup>2</sup>

The question of dealing with neglectful parents is indeed beset with difficulties. Under the Children Act, 1908, a parent or guardian can be prosecuted for neglecting a child "in a manner likely to cause such child unnecessary suffering or injury to its health." This neglect is defined to mean those cases where the parent or guardian "fails to provide adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging," or, if unable to provide the same himself, fails to apply to the Guardians for relief.<sup>3</sup> It is rare for the Local Education Authorities themselves to institute proceedings under this Act. Usually they prefer

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from Annual Reports of Bradford Education Committee for the four years ended March 31, 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1910, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> At Bradford a child who is underfed through neglect is put on the feeding-list for a month before the bill is sent to its parents, so that it may receive the benefit of the meals for this period at any rate.

<sup>3</sup> 8 Edward VII., c. 67, sec. 12.

to refer cases to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Often an improvement in the condition of the child is effected as a result of the visits of this society's inspectors to the home. But when these warnings prove useless, frequently nothing more is done; the society are loth to prosecute, except in extreme cases when they can be practically certain of securing a conviction.

(g)—*Overlapping between the Poor Law and the Education Authorities.*

We have already alluded to the neglect of the Guardians to deal with more than an insignificant fraction of the children who are underfed. The attempt made in 1905 to force them to fulfil their responsibility in this respect was, as we have seen, a complete failure, and the duty was therefore cast upon the Local Education Authorities. But even in the few cases where the Guardians have assumed the responsibility by granting out-relief to the family, the amount of this relief is, in the vast majority of cases, totally inadequate. This was abundantly proved by the Report of the Poor Law Commission in 1909. "The children," they reported, "are undernourished, many of them poorly dressed and many bare-footed . . . the decent mother's one desire is to keep herself and her children out of the work-house. She will, if allowed, try to do this on an impossibly inadequate sum, until both she and her children become mentally and physically deteriorated."<sup>1</sup> When the mother was careless or neglectful no supervision was exercised by the Guardians to see that even this inadequate amount was really spent on the children. This indictment still holds good to-day. The inadequacy of

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1909, 8vo edition, Vol. III. (Minority Report), p. 36.

the relief granted by the Guardians, in all but a few exceptional Unions, has, in fact, become a byword.

In the great majority of towns, the Local Education Authority is consequently driven to feed children whose parents are in receipt of poor relief. Thus two authorities deal with the same case, without, in many instances, either of them knowing what the other is doing.<sup>1</sup> Only in a few cases has any attempt been made to prevent this overlapping. For example, at Leicester (one of the few towns, we may note, where liberal out-relief is granted by the Guardians) there has from the first been co-operation between the Guardians and the Canteen Committee.<sup>2</sup> The Relieving Officer refers to the Canteen Committee many applications that are made to him where temporary help only is needed, and the Committee has frequently tided families over a bad time and saved them from recourse to the Poor Law. On the other hand, when a family is receiving out-relief the Canteen Committee refuses to grant food for the children. At Acton a similar policy has been adopted. If parents who are in receipt of out-relief apply for school meals for their children, the Secretary of the Education Committee recommends them to apply to the Guardians for more relief, at the same time himself writing to the Relieving Officer. As a rule the relief is increased in consequence. Meanwhile the teachers are told to watch the children to see that they do not suffer from want of food. At Dewsbury, also, temporary cases are dealt with by the Canteen Committee, but all chronic cases by the Guardians.<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere an attempt has been made to prevent over-

<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, as we have seen, the Guardians are represented on the Canteen Committee, as at Crewe.

<sup>2</sup> First Annual Report of the Leicester Children's Aid Association, 1907-8, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Dewsbury for 1911, p. 41.

lapping by other means. While the Education Authority undertakes to provide for all the underfed children, an arrangement is made with the Guardians whereby they repay the cost of the meals supplied for all children whose parents are in receipt of relief. The relief is thus given partly in the form of school meals, a plan strongly to be commended, since it ensures that the relief given on account of the children is in fact obtained by them. This plan has been for some years pursued at Bradford. At first there appear to have been complaints that the Guardians were reducing the relief granted, on account of the dinners supplied at school,<sup>1</sup> but the dinners are now given in addition to the ordinary relief.<sup>2</sup> In 1912-13, the Guardians paid £303 to the Education Authority on this account.<sup>3</sup> Even so, there is some slight overlapping, since the Guardians only pay for dinners and in some cases the Canteen Committee are of opinion that a second meal is needed, and consequently breakfasts are granted and paid for by the Education Authority. A similar plan has been adopted at Blackburn,<sup>4</sup> Huddersfield,<sup>5</sup> Brighton,<sup>6</sup> York and Liverpool. In the last named town the arrangement has only recently been made, and is in force in only two of the three Unions into which

<sup>1</sup> Bradford City Council Proceedings, June 16, 1908, p. 395; April 11, 1911, p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> Thus the minimum relief for a widow is 4s., with 2s. each for the first two children, and 1s. each for other children. In addition five dinners a week, amounting in value to 1s. 0½d., are given to all children attending school. (Bradford Poor Law Union, Outdoor Relief Arrangements.)

<sup>3</sup> Bradford Education Committee, Return as to the Working of the Provision of Meals Act for the year ending March 31, 1913.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Blackburn, 1911, p. 218. Out of 59,537 meals given during the year, the Guardians paid for 17,786, or nearly one-third.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Huddersfield Education Committee, 1911, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Report of Brighton Education Committee for the year ending March 31, 1912, p. 28.

the town is divided, West Derby and Liverpool. The Guardians have agreed to issue coupons for school meals to children whose parents are in receipt of out-relief, and will pay to the Education Authority 2d. per meal. We were informed that, in the case of the West Derby Guardians at any rate, these coupons would only be given to children whose mothers were out all day. The relief would be reduced in consequence, though not to the extent of the full value of the meal. The Guardians of the Toxteth Union declined to make a similar arrangement, but suggested that the Local Education Authority should inform them when they found children underfed whose parents were in receipt of relief, and they proposed in these cases to increase the relief.<sup>1</sup>

Other Local Education Authorities have tried this plan of communicating with the Guardians, in the hope that they would grant adequate relief for the needs of the children, but, finding no such result ensue, have discontinued the practice. At Bury St. Edmunds, for instance, it was found in the winter of 1907-8 that "a large percentage of the families whose children were fed at school were in receipt of outdoor relief of an amount which the Education Authority thought inadequate. The attention of the Board of Guardians was called to the fact, but no steps were taken by them."<sup>2</sup> The Education Committee accordingly continued to feed the children, and we gather that now no communication is made by them to the Guardians. Similarly at West Ham we were informed that the Education Committee used to report cases to the Guardians, but

<sup>1</sup> For the arrangements made between the Liverpool Education Committee and the Guardians with regard to payment for children admitted as voluntary cases to the Day Industrial Schools, see post, p. 118 n.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1909, 8vo edition, Vol. III. (Minority Report), p. 166 n.

the practice proved useless and it has been given up, except for special cases, where the Guardians will sometimes increase the relief given.

In a few Unions, as at Leeds, the only result of the Guardians learning that the children are receiving school meals—the need for which points to the conclusion that the out-relief granted is inadequate—is that they promptly reduce the relief, though not contributing to the Local Education Authority anything towards the cost of the meals. They appear to regard the provision of school meals merely as a means of reducing the poor-rates, and casting the burden on other shoulders. Naturally in such circumstances the Local Education Authority does not report cases to the Guardians.

Any systematic arrangement between the two Authorities appears indeed to be exceptional. As a rule there is practically no co-operation, beyond, perhaps, the notification of cases by both authorities to some Mutual Registration Society,<sup>1</sup> or the informal meetings of the Relieving Officers and the School Attendance Officers.<sup>2</sup>

(h)—*The Provision of Meals at Day Industrial Schools and Special Schools.*

We have already alluded to the power of the Local Education Authorities to provide meals for the children attending the Day Industrial Schools and the Special Schools for the mentally or physically defective. The Day Industrial Schools are intended primarily for children who have played truant from the ordinary schools and

<sup>1</sup> Thus at Manchester, the Education Committee and the Guardians send lists of their cases to the District Provident Society, and the Secretary lets each Authority know what the other is doing.

<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to give any figures as to the overlapping that exists, since the practice varies so much in different towns, and in many cases no records are kept.

who are committed by a magistrate's order. But in the case of widows or deserted wives who have to work all day, or when the father is incapacitated from work by illness or infirmity, or if the father is a widower, the children may be admitted to a Day Industrial School, without an order, as "voluntary cases."<sup>1</sup> When children are committed by a magistrate's order, the parents are ordered to make a weekly payment towards the cost of industrial training and meals.<sup>2</sup> In the case of children admitted voluntarily such payment is also theoretically demanded,<sup>3</sup> but in practice it is, as a rule, impossible to exact it. Thus at Liverpool, though small payments are received from widowers, the condition as to payment has to be waived in the case of widows and deserted wives, or when the father is unable to work through illness.<sup>4</sup> At Bootle we were informed that no payment is received from any of the voluntary cases. The Schools are open from 6 or 7 in the morning to 5.30 or 6 at night and three meals are provided. The dietary is as a rule monotonous, being continued week after week with practically no variation. In point of order, as might

<sup>1</sup> Elementary Education Act, 1876 (39 and 40 Vic., c. 79), sec. 16 (4); Children Act, 1908 (8 Edward VII., c. 67), sec. 79; "Day Industrial Schools," by J. C. Legge, in *Proceedings of National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution*, 1911, p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> Children Act, 1908, sec. 82 (1).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 79.

<sup>4</sup> "Day Industrial Schools," by J. C. Legge, in *Proceedings of National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution*, 1911, p. 361. For many years an arrangement has been in force by which the Liverpool Select Vestry pay the Local Education Authority 9d. a week in respect of each child in their area admitted as a voluntary scholar. (*Ibid.*) A few years ago the Guardians of the Toxteth Union agreed, in such cases, where the parent was in receipt of outdoor relief, to increase the relief by 6d. on condition that this was paid to the Education Authority. (*Ibid.*, p. 362.) The West Derby Guardians pay a lump sum of £40 a year.

be expected, the service of the meals compares favourably with those given to necessitous children, erring rather on the side of over-much discipline. It is, unfortunately, by no means uncommon to find absolute silence insisted on, a regulation which has a most depressing effect. In these Day Industrial Schools the Local Education Authorities have a valuable instrument for providing for the numerous cases where mothers are at work all day and so cannot provide proper meals for their children, or where the children are neglected. This was urged by many witnesses before the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws,<sup>1</sup> and again recently by the Departmental Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools.<sup>2</sup> Very few authorities, however, have taken advantage of this power. In 1911 there were only twelve Day Industrial Schools in England, provided by eight authorities, and eight in Scotland, of which seven were in Glasgow.<sup>3</sup> The total attendance numbered a little over 3,000, the voluntary cases amounting to only 308.<sup>4</sup> These numbers showed a decrease compared with previous years,<sup>5</sup> and this decline has since continued, partly owing to the fact that truancy is far less common now than formerly, partly owing to the provision of meals for children attending elementary schools, which renders the Day Industrial Schools less necessary.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909 8vo edition, Vol. III., p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Departmental Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1913, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Fifty-fifth Report on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1911, Part I., pp. 28-30; Part II., p. 20. Two of the schools in England have since been closed, and the school at Leeds is shortly to be given up.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Part I., pp. 267-292; Part II., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Part II., p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Departmental Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1913, p. 62.



The arrangements made for providing for the mentally and physically defective children vary in different towns. Sometimes no special provision is made. At Leicester, for instance, the mentally defective children who come from a distance bring their food with them and the caretaker warms it. Frequently, however, a regular dinner is supplied. Thus at Eastbourne dinners are provided at the Special School for dull and backward children at a very small charge.<sup>1</sup> At Bradford some of the children pay 1½d. a meal, others receive it free. At Liverpool a payment of 1s., 6d. or 3d. a week is demanded, according to the circumstances, the meals being given free in special cases.<sup>2</sup> In Birkenhead, too, the charge varies, some paying 1s. a week, some 2d. or 1d. per meal, at the discretion of the teacher; no meals are given free, children who cannot pay being sent to the centre to have their dinner with the necessitous children from the ordinary elementary schools. There appears to be usually little difficulty in collecting payment. At Birkenhead we were told that some difficulty was experienced at first, but the children appreciate the dinners so much now that they beg their parents to give them the necessary pence.

At the Open Air Schools<sup>3</sup> the common meal always forms part of the regular school routine. As a rule three meals a day are provided,<sup>4</sup> and sometimes milk is given in addition in the middle of the morning. Usually some

<sup>1</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Eastbourne for 1912, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> The majority pay about 6d. a week. In the case of physically defective children the parent's payment is intended to meet the expenses of dinner, any medicines or dressings that may be necessary, and the cost of conveyance. It does not, of course, nearly cover these charges.

<sup>3</sup> In 1911 there were only nine Open Air Schools, maintained by eight authorities. (Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 215.)

<sup>4</sup> At Darlington only a mid-day meal is provided.

charge is made towards the cost of the meals, varying from 6d. to 3s. per week, according to the parents' circumstances, but in necessitous cases the charge is remitted.<sup>1</sup>

The service of the meals at these Special Schools presents in general a marked contrast to the methods prevailing at the centres for necessitous children. For example, at Birkenhead, where the management of the feeding centres leaves much to be desired,<sup>2</sup> the dinner provided at the Mentally Defective School, for all children who care to stay, is served in an attractive and educational manner. One or more teachers are always present to supervise it. The children enter all together and sit down at small tables. The boys and girls take it in turns to lay the tables and clear away afterwards, and help to serve the food. Table-cloths are provided and these are kept remarkably clean. Somewhat similar conditions prevail at Liverpool in the Special Schools for Physically and Mentally Defective Children.<sup>3</sup> But it is at a school for feeble-minded children at Bradford that we found the most perfect arrangements. The smallness of the numbers—only some 17 or 18 children being present—allowed

<sup>1</sup> At Norwich the charge varies from 6d. to 1s. 6d. ; at Sheffield, from 6d. to 2s. 6d. ; at Halifax it may amount to 3s. At Barnsley all the parents are charged 2s. 6d. per week, no children being admitted without payment. At Bradford the meals are given free to all.

<sup>2</sup> See ante, pp. 95-6.

<sup>3</sup> At one of these schools, the mentally defective children were having their dinner in one room, the physically defective in an adjoining room. All the children stay for the meal. The headmistress supervised, assisted by a teacher for the mentally defective, and the school nurse for the physically defective children. Tablecloths were provided for the latter, but not for the former. The dinner was cooked by the children who had been attending the cookery class in the morning; the children laid the tables, and monitors helped to serve the food.

attention to be paid to each individual child. The dinner was served in a bright cheerful hall, and the tables were nicely laid by the children, with table-cloths, plants and flowers ; these latter the children often bring themselves. Two teachers are always present and preside at the two tables, having their dinner with the children. The children's manners were excellent and spoke volumes for the patience and care exercised by the teachers.

The example afforded by the service of the meals at these special schools might well be imitated by the Education Authorities in providing meals at the ordinary elementary schools.

(2)—*The Underfed Child in Rural Schools*

We have confined our investigations almost entirely to the Urban Districts. We must, however, briefly touch upon the question of underfeeding in the country. Here the conditions are different. The problem is not only how to provide for the children who do not get sufficient to eat ; there are also to be considered the large numbers who are unable to return home at midday and have to bring their dinner to school with them. Many of these children have to walk long distances, perhaps two miles, three miles, or even more. The long walk necessitates an early start from home ; this makes the interval between breakfast and dinner long and the exercise sharpens the appetite. Hence it is of the greatest importance that the midday meal should be adequate. In most cases, however, as the reports of School Medical Officers abundantly testify, the dinner which these children bring with them consists of bread and jam, cake or pastry, with perhaps a bottle of cold tea.<sup>1</sup> In a few schools the

<sup>1</sup> In East Sussex, for instance, where particulars were supplied by the teachers as to the meals brought by eleven of the children, it was found that the food was totally inadequate, in most cases

teachers have organised cocoa clubs, the children paying 1d. or 1½d. per week, which is as a rule just sufficient to cover expenses.<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, it is noticed, the weekly payment for cocoa has a good effect on the attendance. "A child having once paid his or her cocoa fee at the beginning of the week seldom stays away from school during the remainder of the week if it can possibly be avoided."<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes the teacher encourages the children to bring bottles of milk, cocoa or coffee and sees that they are warmed over the fire before being partaken of.

Occasionally a regular dinner is provided. We have already mentioned the experiment made at Rousdon

consisting of bread and butter, or cake, with perhaps a small piece of cheese or an apple. Two children of five years old, who had to walk two miles to school, brought, one of them bread and butter only, the other cake. Three children, who had to walk three and a half miles, brought either cake or only bread. ("The Diet of Elementary School Children in Country Districts," by Dr. George Finch, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, p. 29.) In a Bedfordshire school out of 62 children who brought their dinner to school with them, one had an apple tart, three had bread and cheese, while 58 had "bread with a thin layer of butter or lard on it, or else bread and jam, or bread and syrup. This meal was washed down with water, as nothing hot was obtainable." ("How the Family of the Agricultural Labourer Lives," by Ronald T. Herdman, reprinted in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, p. 341.)

<sup>1</sup> Thus at Brynconin, where 85 children are supplied daily with cocoa for a weekly charge of 1d., the week's expenditure on cocoa, sugar and milk amounts to 6s. 6d., and the children's payments to 6s. 10d. (Report of the School Medical Officer for Pembroke-shire for 1912, p. 14.) See also Reports of the School Medical Officer for Hampshire (1910), p. 25; for the Isle of Ely (1910), p. 18; for Gloucestershire (1910), p. 53; for East Suffolk (1910), p. 19; for West Sussex (1911), p. 10. Sometimes the cocoa is provided free through the generosity of the teachers. (See Report of Monmouthshire Education Committee on the Medical Inspection Department for 1910, p. 9.)

<sup>2</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Hampshire for 1910, p. 25.

by Sir Henry Peek in 1876. This has been continued to the present day. A hot dinner is provided daily, consisting of one course, soup with bread and vegetables two days a week, and some form of suet pudding the other three days. About half the children stay for the dinner and pay one penny each, these payments just about covering the cost of the food. The meal is served in a dining-room in the school and the ex-headmaster and the present headmaster voluntarily undertake the supervision.

A somewhat similar plan has been tried at Grassington, in Yorkshire. When, eighteen years ago, the teaching of cookery was introduced, it was resolved to combine with that instruction the provision of a hot midday meal. The children not only cook the dinner themselves, but they take it in turns to order and pay for the materials, thus acquiring the valuable knowledge how to buy. They are taught the value of the different foodstuffs and learn how to make a good substantial dinner at a little cost. A two-course dinner, ample and varied, is provided daily at the school.<sup>1</sup> Each child is allowed to eat as much as it wants, but no waste is allowed. Marvellous as it appears, the payment of a rd. per meal covers the cost of the food.<sup>2</sup> The dinner appears to have been intended chiefly for the children who came from a distance, but the parents of the children who live in the village have been glad to avail themselves of the provision, since the school dinner is better than they can supply at home.<sup>3</sup> Nearly half the children stay. All the arrange-

<sup>1</sup> For sample menus, see Appendix I., p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the cost of the food for the dinners for twelve weeks amounted to £7 9s. 8d., and the children's payments to £7 9s. 5d. On cold snowy mornings hot cocoa is provided before morning school for all the children. The cost of this is, we gather, borne entirely by the headmaster and his wife.

<sup>3</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, July 9, 1908.

ments are, and have from the first been, made by the headmaster's wife, who takes the cookery lesson and serves the meal herself, and the success of the experiment must be very largely attributed to her voluntary labours.

In two schools in Cheshire also, Siddington and Nether Alderley, hot dinners are provided at a charge of 1½d., in the former during the winter months, in the latter all the year round. In both cases the children's payments cover, or slightly more than cover, the cost of the food, the other expenses being borne by voluntary funds.

Such provision is, however, quite exceptional. As a rule no provision whatever is made. "I have only once seen any supervision of the meal on the part of the teachers," writes a late Assistant School Medical Officer for East Sussex; "in fine weather the children generally eat [their dinner] out of doors; in bad weather it is taken in the school or cloak-room in what are often very unhygienic surroundings."<sup>1</sup> "There is no doubt," writes another School Medical Officer, "that at some of the schools the conditions in which the children get their midday meal are deplorable."<sup>2</sup> "It is only too common a sight," reports the School Medical Officer for Derbyshire, "to see little children sitting in a corner of the classroom, cloak-room or even the playground, munching at thick slices of bread and butter. Under these circumstances," he continues, "it cannot be wondered at that children below the normal development are to be found in our schools."<sup>3</sup> In Anglesey the School Medical Officer

<sup>1</sup> "The Diet of Elementary School Children in Country Districts," by Dr. George Finch, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Hampshire, 1910, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 284.

finds more children badly nourished in the rural areas than in the urban areas ; this he attributes mainly to the long walk to school every day, the inadequacy of the midday meal and the hurried manner in which it is eaten.<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed essential that in all country schools to which children come from a distance, provision should be made for the serving of a midday meal under proper supervision.<sup>2</sup> As Dr. George Finch points out, " the authority which requires the child to spend its day away from home might not unreasonably be expected by the parents to make some provision that its midday meal might be taken under not unfavourable conditions. The parent, however conscientious, cannot adequately deal with the problem, and the provision of suitable cold food is not an easy matter, even in the more well-to-do family." <sup>3</sup> The meals should be served as part of the school curriculum and might well be combined with the teaching of cookery as is done at Grassington

## CONCLUSIONS

It may be useful now to sum up the main points which emerge from the foregoing description. The proposal, which we shall discuss in the final chapter, to make the midday meal a part of the school curriculum,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 283-4.

<sup>2</sup> As we have seen, the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding in 1905 recommended that managers of country schools should arrange, during the winter at any rate, to provide either a hot dinner or soup or cocoa for children who lived too far away to go home at mid-day. (See ante, p. 38.)

<sup>3</sup> " The Diet of Elementary School Children in Country Districts," by Dr. George Finch, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, p. 109.

to be attended by all children who wish to avail themselves of the provision, would obviate many of the difficulties that arise under the present system. Meanwhile we may point out some ways in which improvements can be effected, apart from this more drastic proposal.

1. Since the Provision of Meals Act is only permissive, Local Education Authorities are allowed to remain inactive in spite of the fact that children in their schools are underfed, and that no adequate provision is made by voluntary agencies. It should be made obligatory on the Local Authority to take action in such a case.

2. The limitation of the amount which may be spent on food by the Local Education Authority to the sum yielded by a halfpenny rate restricts operations in some towns, and prevents provision being made for all the necessitous children. This limitation should be removed.

An alteration of the law in these two directions would merely assimilate the powers and duties of the English Education Authorities to those already conferred on the Scottish School Boards by the Education (Scotland) Act of 1908.<sup>1</sup>

3. The selection of the children who are to receive school meals is based, often solely and always primarily, on the poverty test. Little attempt is made to link up the provision of meals with the school medical service. The meals, that is to say, are regarded primarily as a means of relieving distress rather than as a remedy for malnutrition. The numbers selected vary according to the policy of the Local Education Authority and the views taken by the individual head teachers. Nowhere can the selection of the children be said to be satisfactory. In towns such as Bradford, where the Local Authority is determined to search out all cases of children who are suffering from lack of food, the great majority of underfed

<sup>1</sup> See post, pp. 237-8.



children are doubtless discovered, but in other towns numbers of such children are overlooked and left unprovided for, while everywhere little or no provision is made for the countless children who are improperly fed at home. We shall discuss in the final chapter the best method to be pursued in this matter of selecting the children.

4. There is great diversity of practice in different towns with regard to the time at which the meal is given, the manner in which it is prepared and served, and the kind of food supplied. Where only one meal is provided, it would appear that dinner is for many reasons preferable to breakfast. The dietary should be varied and should be drawn up in consultation with the School Medical Officer; it should be so planned as to contain a due proportion of the elements which are lacking in the child's home diet, and special provision should be made for the infants. The preparation of the meals should not be left to caterers but should be undertaken by the Local Authority, so that adherence to the approved dietary and a high standard of quality can be assured. The meal should be regarded as part of the school curriculum. It should be served as far as possible on the school premises, and should be attended only by children from that particular school. The children should be taught to set the tables and wait on one another, the tables being nicely laid, with table-cloths and, if possible, flowers or plants. Clean hands and faces and orderly behaviour should be insisted on. Some of the teachers should supervise the meal and should receive some extra remuneration for this service.

5. The discontinuance of the school meals during the holidays has been shown to undo much of the benefit derived during term-time, and it entails unnecessary suffering on the children. The expenditure of the rates on holiday feeding must be legalised. The limitation of

the provision to the winter months, as is the practice in some towns, is even more absurd. Local Authorities should be required to continue the school meals throughout the year, if need exists.

6. The sums contributed by the parents towards the cost of their children's meals amount to only a trifling fraction of the total expenditure. The power of providing meals as a matter of convenience for children whose parents are able and willing to pay has been very sparingly used by the Local Education Authorities, as far as the ordinary elementary schools are concerned. In the special schools for defective children, on the other hand, where not infrequently a midday meal is provided for all the children, a considerable proportion of the parents contribute towards the cost. It is difficult to say whether the establishment of School Restaurants in the ordinary schools would be successful. One point, however, seems clear; if the plan is to succeed, the meals must be intended primarily for paying children; if they are provided mainly for necessitous children, parents who can afford to pay will not send their children to any great extent.

In the case of the parents who can afford to feed their children but neglect to do so, the attempt to recover the cost of the meals supplied to the children results as a rule in almost total failure, owing to the extreme difficulty of obtaining conclusive evidence of the parents' ability to pay. An attempt to recover may be worse than useless, for it frequently leads the parent to withdraw his children promptly from the school meals, though their need of the meals continues as great as before.

7. Owing to the inadequate relief usually given by the Boards of Guardians, the Local Education Authorities are in many cases forced to feed children whose parents are receiving poor relief. In only a few towns is any

systematic attempt made to prevent this overlapping between the two authorities. So long as the Guardians retain their present functions, the plan adopted at Bradford and a few other towns, by which the out-relief granted by the Guardians is given partly in the form of school meals, the Guardians paying the Education Authority for these meals, might well be extended to other towns. By this plan overlapping of relief is avoided, while it ensures that the relief given to the mother on account of her children is in effect obtained by them.

8. In the rural districts the conditions under which the children eat their midday meal are frequently deplorable. The long walk to school renders it even more important than it is in the towns that the meal should be a substantial one, but the food which the children bring with them is as a rule entirely inadequate. In the few schools where a hot dinner has been provided, the plan has met with marked success, and such provision should be made in all schools. It might advantageously be combined with the teaching of cookery, a plan which is more practicable in the country than in the towns, since the numbers to be provided for are comparatively small.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PROVISION OF MEALS IN LONDON

WE have reserved the treatment of London for a separate chapter since, owing to its size and the diverse conditions prevailing in the different districts, it presents problems of special difficulty. We shall describe in this chapter the provision made in the early years of this century by voluntary agencies, and the final assumption by the London County Council of the whole responsibility of dealing with its underfed children ; we shall trace the gradual building up of a vast and complex organisation to deal not only with the question of school meals, but also with other matters affecting the general welfare of the children ; and we shall discuss the actual methods of working at the present day.

#### (a)—*The Organisation of the Voluntary Agencies*

We have already sketched the early history of the movement in London, and described the attempts made by the London School Board to organise the host of voluntary agencies.<sup>1</sup> The proposal put forward by a Committee of the School Board in 1899 to make that body responsible for providing food for all its underfed children was, as we have shown, defeated by a large majority, and a renewed attempt was made by the establishment of a central organisation, the Joint Committee on Underfed Children, to organise the voluntary agencies.

This attempt met with but little more success than the earlier endeavours. The functions of the Joint

<sup>1</sup> See ante, pp. 16-27.

Committee were limited to receiving reports from the Relief Committees, pointing out defects in their methods of working, and acting generally as a medium of communication between these committees and the collecting agencies. If the Relief Committees failed to send reports, the Joint Committee had no power to compel them to do so, nor could the Committee insist on the remedying of the defects which they pointed out. By 1907 the Committee were able to report that only one school had been discovered in which meals were provided but no report received. "We may hope, therefore," they continue, "that . . . the instructions of the Council . . . have at last reached all head teachers and are being obeyed. But in default of any executive and inspecting machinery, it has taken the persistent efforts of the Joint Committee, during six years, to effect this result, if indeed it has really been effected."<sup>1</sup> The greatest difficulty was experienced in getting Relief Committees established in every school or group of schools in which underfed children were provided with meals.<sup>2</sup> Even when these committees were appointed, the meetings of many of them were held infrequently and for formal business only, the selection of the children and the enquiry into the parents' circumstances being left entirely to the teachers.<sup>3</sup> Consequently the methods

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Joint Committee on Underfed Children, for 1906-7, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Fourth Annual Report of the Joint Committee on Underfed Children, 1904, pp. 1-2; Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Qs. 1649, 1650 (evidence of Mr. T. E. Harvey). Even in 1908 there were 74 schools at which feeding took place which had not a properly constituted committee. (London County Council, Report by Executive Officer (Education), Appendix A to agenda of Sub-Committee on Underfed Children, July 6, 1908.)

<sup>3</sup> "There is supposed to be a committee in every school," said one headmaster, "but the committees never meet in the

of selection differed widely, even in the same school, the different departments paying no attention to what the others were doing.<sup>1</sup> The enquiry was generally totally inadequate, and in some cases was not even attempted.<sup>2</sup> The Joint Committee urged that, when meals were given at all, they should be given regularly at least four if not five days a week, and should be continued throughout the year if necessary.<sup>3</sup> But in 1907 we find that "there are still a good many schools where meals are only provided on one or two days, and more where they are only given on three days, the average number throughout the schools being  $2\frac{3}{4}$  meals per child per week."<sup>4</sup> In only sixteen schools were the meals continued for more than twenty weeks during the year.<sup>5</sup>

The Joint Committee strenuously opposed the theory, vast majority of cases, and if they do, they never undertake personal investigation." (Report of the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Q. 849, evidence of Mr. Marshall Jackman.) "There is [a Relief Committee] in accordance with the rules," declared another headmaster, but "the Committee acts really through the head teachers. . . . The Committee say that the teachers have their confidence, and they could not do any good by attempting themselves to help as a committee, and therefore they do not help." (Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Q. 5149 (evidence of Mr. T. P. Shovelier.) See also *Ibid.*, Qs. 4773A, 4937-4939, 6233, 6265.

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Qs. 185, 5154.

<sup>2</sup> "The duty of making enquiries by the managers, or by outsiders working for them, into the home conditions of the children is, with some remarkable exceptions, seldom well done, and often not done at all. They are authorised to invite assistance from attendance officers, . . . from Charity Organisation Society visitors, district visitors, country holiday fund visitors, and similar persons, but we have very seldom found that this class of person has been consulted." (Report of the Joint Committee on Underfed Children for 1906-7, p. 23.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* for 1904-5, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* for 1906-7, Appendix G., p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

which was now steadily gaining ground, that the rates should be utilised for the supply of food. In 1904 they report that, in their opinion, "all real distress on any considerable scale has been effectually met. . . . They have never been restricted in their efforts for want of funds, and there is no reason to think that any organisations dealing with public money would be more efficient than these bodies dealing with charitable money. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that, even as things are now, relief is often given to children who are not really in want, and there is no doubt that if the public purse were being drawn upon, relief would be distributed more lavishly."<sup>1</sup> The County Council could hardly, however, remain unmoved by the disquieting report of the Committee on Physical Deterioration published in the same year. Dr. Eichholz, in his evidence before the committee, had indeed described the existing method of feeding in London as "entirely in the nature of a temporary stop-gap. There is," he declared, "but little concentrated effort at building up enfeebled constitutions, school feeding doing little beyond arresting further degeneracy."<sup>2</sup> In April, 1905, the Council accordingly resolved "that, with a view to checking the physical deterioration among the London population and securing

<sup>1</sup> Fourth Annual Report of the Joint Committee on Underfed Children, 1904, p. 2. Evidence was given before the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding in 1905, which showed that difficulty was experienced in collecting sufficient funds. The London Schools Dinner Association found that people would contribute at Christmas time, but in the early spring, when the work was heaviest, the subscriptions ceased. (Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Medical Inspection and Feeding, 1905, Qs. 2074, 2081-2083. See also evidence of Mr. Marshall Jackman before the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Qs. 780, 788-790.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, 1904, Q. 477.

the best result from the expenditure on education, it be referred to the Education Committee to consider and report as to the necessary Parliamentary power being obtained for the provision of food where necessary for the children attending rate-supported schools in London.”<sup>1</sup> The Education Committee, however, while admitting that there were numbers of underfed and ill-fed children attending the schools and that in the case of these children it was impossible to secure the best results from an educational standpoint, were nevertheless of opinion that, “while the necessity for feeding children as the last resort out of public funds is a proposition endorsed by the whole spirit of the Poor Law,” there were strong arguments against seeking power to utilise the rates at present. The provision of school meals out of public funds must tend to lessen parental responsibility, and the expense entailed would be very serious, since the numbers, though small at first, would inevitably tend to increase.<sup>2</sup> The Committee recommended, therefore, that the experiment should be tried of utilising the food prepared at the cookery centres. The advantages of this course would be twofold. The experiment would prove whether there was a demand on the part of the better-off parents for the provision of cheap dinners at school, while the training at the cookery centres would be improved by receiving a more practical trend.<sup>3</sup>

The experiment was accordingly tried at five<sup>4</sup> selected schools. In three of these schools, which were situated in poor districts, dinners were supplied at 1½d each. In the other two schools, situated in better-class neighbourhoods, the cost was 2d. and 3d., the parents preferring

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, April 11, 1905, p. 1381.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, July 11, 1905, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> The experiment was later extended to fifteen schools.



the more expensive dinner.<sup>1</sup> The Council having no power to spend the rates on the provision of food, the meals had to be paid for by the parents or by charitable agencies. The teachers were instructed not to choose only necessitous children, but to distribute the tickets fairly between the children in the schools, the object being to try the experiment of a common dinner.<sup>2</sup> From an educational point of view the dinners were very successful. The children were taught to eat properly,<sup>3</sup> and the girls attending the cookery class benefited by the practical training. It appeared, too, that there was a demand, in certain districts at any rate, for the provision of cheap dinners at school.<sup>4</sup> But the experiment was on too small a scale to have much practical bearing on the question of feeding necessitous children. For large numbers the cookery centres were quite inadequate and any attempt to use them primarily for the object of providing children's meals would interfere with the instruction given.

(b)—*The Assumption of Responsibility by the County Council*

No further serious attempt was made for some years to place the provision of food upon the rates. On the passing

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills, 1906, Qs. 451\*, 500, evidence of Mr. A. J. Shephard.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 327.

<sup>3</sup> The tables were "nicely laid and with tablecloths, with all the ordinary appliances and requirements of a table put there, such as salt cellars, knives and forks, and everything of that kind. The tables were laid out with flowers . . . I think I may quite certainly say that some of these children had never sat down to a meal of that description in their lives." (*Ibid.*, Q. 331.)

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, December 19, 1905, p. 2138. About eighty per cent. of the meals were paid for by the parents, the remaining twenty per cent. being paid for by friends or voluntary agencies. (Report of the Select Committee on the Education (Provision of Meals) Bills, 1906, Q. 326.)

of the Provision of Meals Act the County Council took over the whole responsibility for the provision, the Joint Committee on Underfed Children, which had been composed partly of representatives of voluntary organisations,<sup>1</sup> giving place to a Sub-Committee of the Education Committee<sup>2</sup>; but voluntary funds were still relied on. In 1908, however, the supply began to fail. In July of that year a conference of the Mayors of the London boroughs had declared that there was no reason to fear that voluntary contributions would be insufficient to defray the cost of food.<sup>3</sup> The appeal subsequently issued met, however, with a very meagre response, only some £6,000 being subscribed.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the year it became clear that recourse must be had to the rates, and application was accordingly made to the Board of Education. The new system was put in force early in 1909.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile the constant complaints of the varying methods pursued by the different Care Committees<sup>6</sup> in the selection of the children, and the rapid increase in the number of children fed,<sup>7</sup> led the Sub-Committee on

<sup>1</sup> When, in 1904, the London School Board was superseded by the London County Council, the Joint Committee on Underfed Children had been continued by the latter body, its constitution remaining practically unaltered. (London County Council, Report of Education Committee, 1908-9, Part II., p. 3.)

<sup>2</sup> This Sub-Committee was known at first as the Sub-Committee on Underfed Children. In December, 1908, the name was altered to the Children's Care (Central) Sub-Committee. (*Ibid.*, p. 4.)

<sup>3</sup> See Minutes of the London County Council, November 24, 1908, p. 1120.

<sup>4</sup> "State Feeding of School Children in London," by Sir Charles Elliott, in *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1909, p. 866.

<sup>5</sup> London County Council, Report of the Education Committee for 1908-9, Part II., p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> The local Relief Committees had been re-organised under the name of Children's Care Committees in July, 1907. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>7</sup> The numbers greatly increased during the winter of 1907-8, and reached a maximum of 49,043 in March, 1908. (London

Underfed Children to call for a report on the circumstances of these children, so that the cause of the distress might be ascertained and some light thrown on the question how far the provision of free meals was really an effective remedy for the evils which existed.<sup>1</sup> An investigation was accordingly conducted by the two officials who had been appointed by the Council to organise the work of the local Care Committees. Twelve schools were selected in different districts, and a careful enquiry made into the circumstances of all the children at these schools who were receiving free meals. In all 1,218 families were dealt with, containing 3,334 children.

In a small number of the cases, 3·9 per cent., the distress was found to be due to illness or some other temporary misfortune; unemployment of the wage-earner accounted for 5·7 per cent., and under-employment for 19 per cent., of the cases; in 44·7 per cent. the cause of the distress was attributed to the intemperance or wastefulness of the parents.<sup>2</sup> The necessity of providing school meals, at any rate as a temporary expedient, was clearly proved. It was found that, though 21·12 per cent. of the children were not necessitous, the remaining 78·88 per cent. were necessitous "in the sense of lacking sufficient food," and that they would require school meals "until effective Care Committees are able to check the diseases attendant on partial employment, bad housing and other evils."<sup>3</sup> So far little attempt had been made to improve the conditions of the homes by systematic visiting. With the majority of the Care Committees, declared the organisers, "their only active members are the head teachers and their County Council, Report on the Home Circumstances of Necessitous Children in twelve selected schools, 1908, p. 2.)

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

only visitors are the attendance officers.”<sup>1</sup> The complaints as to want of uniformity in the selection of the children were corroborated. In many schools “each department has its own system of enquiry, its own method of selection, its own standard of necessity, and the result is that it is seldom that all the school children of one family are on the necessitous list.”<sup>2</sup> The extent of overlapping between the Education Authority and the Boards of Guardians was shown by the fact that out of the 1,218 families 39 were in receipt of out-relief while no fewer than 165 had been in receipt of relief recently.<sup>3</sup>

To put an end to all this want of uniformity it was recommended that a responsible secretary visitor should be appointed for each school or group of schools, who would organise bands of voluntary workers, and co-operate with all existing local agencies for social improvement. It was urged that the duties of the Care Committees should not be confined to the provision of meals, but should include everything pertaining to the health and general well-being of the child.<sup>4</sup> This latter recommendation was carried out. The Care Committees were re-organised and given additional duties, the supervision of medical treatment and the work of after-care,<sup>5</sup> and it was resolved that a committee should be appointed for every elementary school, not only for those which contained “necessitous” children.<sup>6</sup> The suggestion that a paid secretary should be appointed for every school or group of schools

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. See also the description of the methods employed at typical schools. (*Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> A few Care Committees were already carrying out these functions. See, for instance, the description of the methods adopted at one school (*Ibid.*, p. 19, No. C.)

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, April 6, 1909, pp. 855-6.

was not adopted. The Council decided merely to appoint twelve paid lady workers for the whole of London, whose duties would be to strengthen the Care Committees. At the same time, as a further step towards uniformity, local associations of Care Committees were formed. Several such associations had already come into existence voluntarily, but they were now made uniform and permanent. The functions of these associations, which numbered 27, were to make all the arrangements in connection with the feeding centres, and to collect voluntary contributions. They were also to act as advisory bodies. At their meetings would be discussed such questions as the selection of children to be fed, after-care, medical treatment, and any other duties falling to the Care Committees to be performed. They would thus, it was hoped, initiate a common policy and serve as a means of co-ordinating the work of the various Care Committees. Two-thirds of their members were to be representatives of Care Committees, one-sixth were to be nominated by the Teachers' Local Consultative Committees, and one-sixth appointed by the Children's Care (Central) Sub-Committee.<sup>1</sup>

There are thus to-day three distinct, though inter-dependent, organisations—the Children's Care (Central) Sub-Committee, the Local Associations of Care Committees and the local Care Committees appointed for each school.

In considering the development in London of the movement for the provision of meals, one is struck by the haphazard way in which the vast organisation has been built up. The County Council has from the first been reluctant to undertake the responsibility for its

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, April 6, 1909, pp. 856, 857; Handbook containing general information with reference to Children's Care, 1912, pp. 7-8, 88.

underfed children. "The whole question of deciding which children are underfed, and of making special provision for such children," declared the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Underfed Children in 1908, "should really be one for the Poor Law Authority to decide, and not the Education Authority."<sup>1</sup> The attempt to make the Guardians carry out their duty having signally failed, the London County Council was forced to undertake the task, but it has done so in a half-hearted fashion. The results of this failure to grasp the problem in a statesmanlike manner are conspicuously evident in the conditions prevailing to-day.

(c)—*The Extent of the Provision*

The total expenditure on the provision of meals in London amounted, for the year 1912-13, to £99,805. Of this by far the greater part, £98,111, was derived from the rates, voluntary contributions amounting to only £3. Apart from these voluntary contributions collected by the Local Associations, however, a few schools "contract out" and supply the meals from their own private sources.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, large sums were collected by voluntary organisations for the provision of meals during the holidays, especially during the summer holiday of 1912, owing to the distress caused by the dock strike. And

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Home Circumstances of Necessitous Children in twelve selected schools, 1908, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Thus at St. Giles'-in-the-Fields the expenditure on the provision of food is still met from voluntary funds. At Hampstead, in all the schools except one or two, the provision of food for necessitous children is paid for by the Hampstead Council of Social Welfare. The Care Committee refers to the Council of Social Welfare cases which are suitable for home relief, *i.e.*, cases where the mother can be trusted to look after the children at home; in these cases adequate relief for the whole family is given by the Council. If the mother cannot be trusted or if she goes out to work all day, the children receive meals at the feeding centre, the Council paying for these meals.

besides this holiday feeding, which, since it cannot be met out of the rates, must be paid for out of voluntary funds, there are still a certain number of voluntary agencies which are providing meals quite independently of the County Council.

Amongst the most important of these is the London Vegetarian Association. One of the chief objects of this Association, which has been in existence many years, is the popularisation in the homes of the poor of a vegetable diet which is at once both cheap and wholesome. Dinners are provided consisting of a bowl of vegetable soup, a slice of wholemeal bread and a slab of pudding. As a rule the meals are given during the winter only, being continued during the Christmas holidays and, if necessary, during the Easter holidays, and on Saturdays also. The number of centres opened varies according to the state of the Association's finances and the need that exists. During the present winter some half-dozen have been established, besides the central dépôt in Whitechapel, about 900 children on an average being fed daily. Since the passing of the Provision of Meals Act the activities of the Association, as far as the children are concerned, have been confined theoretically to the supply of dinners to children under school age or to children who wish to pay for the meals. But school children who prefer to be fed by the Association rather than by the school are also given meals, as in addition are those who are not considered necessitous by the School Care Committee. Any child can have a dinner on producing a halfpenny. Free dinners are only given to children for whom application is made by some charitable agency, district visitors, Little Sisters of the Poor or other persons interested, no enquiry being made by the Association itself in these cases. It is clear that there is much danger of overlapping—in fact it has been found that, in some cases,

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children have obtained a dinner at school first and have then gone on to the dépôt. In other cases it seems that the Association feeds some children of a family, the Care Committee others.

The total number of individual children fed during the year 1912-13 was 100,771,<sup>1</sup> the average weekly number being 41,529. The numbers fed during the last thirteen years are seen in the following table :—<sup>2</sup>

	Season.	Average weekly number of children fed.
1900-01 (August to July inclusive)	..	18,857
1901-02	.. ..	20,085
1902-03	.. ..	22,206
1903-04	.. ..	23,842
1904-05	.. ..	26,951
1905-06	.. ..	27,159
1906-07	.. ..	29,334
1907-08	.. ..	37,979
1908-09	.. ..	39,632
1909-10 (August 1 to March 31)	..	42,153
1910-11 (April 1 to March 31)	..	41,672
1911-12 .. .. .	..	36,897
1912-13 .. .. .	..	41,529

### (d)—*The Care Committee*

In the selection of the children the County Council has throughout pursued the policy of keeping the numbers fed as low as possible. The School Doctor may recommend for meals, or more frequently for milk or codliver

<sup>1</sup> These are necessitous children only. This number includes the necessitous children in the Defective Schools, except the Cripple Schools, where the meals are provided by the Cripple Children's Dinners Committee. (See post, pp. 155-6.)

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report of London County Council for 1911, Vol. IV., p. 33. The figures for the earlier years are not reliable owing to the multiplicity of agencies providing food.



oil, under-nourished children whom he discovers in the course of medical inspection,<sup>1</sup> but the number of such cases is comparatively small. As a rule the children are selected by the teachers (either on their own initiative or, more frequently, on the application of the parents) on the ground of poverty.

The enquiry into the home circumstances of these children and the final decision as to which of them shall be fed, devolve upon the Care Committees. These Care Committees form the most striking feature of the administration of the Provision of Meals Act in London. In no other town have the services of the volunteer worker been utilised to such an extent.<sup>2</sup> As we have seen, the County Council decided in 1909 that a Children's Care Committee should be formed for every elementary school, and there is now practically no school for which a committee has not been appointed.<sup>3</sup> The committees consist of two or three of the School Managers, together with not less than four voluntary workers appointed by the Children's Care (Central) Sub-Committee.<sup>4</sup> The head teachers, though not members,<sup>5</sup> usually attend the meetings, and in some cases undertake

<sup>1</sup> The teachers are asked to point out to the school doctor any children about to be inspected whose names are on the necessitous register. (London County Council, Handbook containing general information with reference to Children's Care, 1912, p. 18.)

<sup>2</sup> For examples of Care Committees in provincial towns, see ante, pp. 65-66. In one or two Scottish towns also Care Committees have been formed (see post, pp. 240, 241, 244-5.)

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the ordinary elementary schools, Care Committees have been formed also for the Special Schools for Defective Children, with the exception of the Physically Defective.

<sup>4</sup> In a few cases the committees are composed entirely, or almost entirely, of working men.

<sup>5</sup> In 1908 the Care Committees were very largely composed of teachers. Out of the total membership of 2,939, 1,278, or about three-sevenths, were teachers, 1,391 were school managers, and

a considerable amount of clerical work. The members of these committees number some 5,600,<sup>1</sup> but of these many take little or no part in the work, and the effective membership amounts perhaps to not more than two-thirds of this total.

The functions of the Care Committees are numerous and important. They do not merely decide which children shall receive school meals. They have also to "follow up" cases of children who are found by the School Medical Officer to need medical treatment, and, by visiting the homes, induce the parents to obtain this treatment; often they arrange for the supply of spectacles at reduced rates and collect payment from the parents by instalments. Further, they have to advise parents in connection with the employment of their children, referring suitable cases to the Local Juvenile Advisory Committee, Apprenticeship Committee or other agency, and generally befriending the children leaving school. Some committees undertake the work in connection with the Children's Country Holidays Fund. Frequently the Care Committee makes arrangements for the supply of boots,<sup>2</sup> and sometimes also clothing, gratuitously or at reduced rates.

The advantages of such a system of voluntary workers, acting in connection with, and under the guidance of, the Local Authority are many. The volunteer worker, as has often been pointed out, can bring to bear on individual cases a patience and an enthusiasm which the only 270 were voluntary workers. (London County Council, Agenda for Sub-Committee on Underfed Children, Appendix A, July 6, 1908.)

<sup>1</sup> London County Council, list of members of Children's Care (School) Committees, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> At the end of 1911, organisations for the supply of boots were in existence in 1,012 schools. These organisations were controlled by the Care Committees, managers, or head teachers. (Report of the London County Council for 1911, Vol. IV., p. 38.)

official has no time to bestow. By getting into friendly relations with the mother, the volunteer visitor will often be able to help the family in numberless ways. The Care Committee system represents, indeed, one of the most hopeful movements of the time, denoting, as it does, an awakening of the social conscience and a revolt against the old system of district visiting, which meant too frequently merely the giving of a dole, a system which encouraged a patronising attitude on the one hand, and a cadging habit on the other. From the Care Committee visitor little in the way of material gifts is to be expected. Instead, some effort is demanded from the parent. He, or more usually she, is asked to co-operate with the Care Committee in doing what is necessary for the child's welfare. Moreover, the Care Committee is invaluable as a means of educating public opinion. Many will be found who, though perhaps strongly opposed in theory to the whole system of the provision of free meals, are yet willing to work for the children, and by contact with the children and their homes will learn something of the life and struggles of the poor, and a better mutual understanding will be brought about. As the Warden of a Settlement in Liverpool has pointed out, "it is a constant lament of administrators of education that the public care more for saving the rates than making citizens. The complaint is justified. We only care about what we understand; the public understands the money it has to pay, but it does not understand what happens to it. As a matter of fact ninety per cent. of the ratepaying public have never been at a feeding centre or seen a medical inspection; and their own education was of such a scanty nature that one cannot expect their general imagination to supply the deficiency. Hence they grumble at paying for a service of which they are ignorant. The remedy lies in making them understand. From the

young men and women of these families we can recruit Care Committee workers. They will visit the homes of the people, the feeding centres and the school; their imagination will be stirred and their intellects quickened; finally, the time will come when an enlightened public opinion will be the critic of the education policy of our city.”<sup>1</sup> Splendid work is now being done in many parts of London by the Care Committees and it is greatly to be regretted that the system has not been more widely adopted in the provinces.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of relying only on voluntary help must not be overlooked. In the first place there is the difficulty of securing enough workers. Remarkable as has been the response to the appeal of the County Council for helpers, yet many more are needed. In the residential parts of London this difficulty is not so much felt, but in the poorer districts, where the need is greatest, it is impossible to find enough people with leisure to devote to the work. From every Care Committee that we have visited comes the cry for more helpers. If the friendly relations with the parents are to be established, which are essential if the maximum amount of good is to be derived from the various activities which are undertaken by the school authorities, it is of the greatest importance that the homes should be visited; but it is rare to find a sufficient supply of workers forthcoming for this visiting to be undertaken regularly. It is true that some committees visit the homes once a month or sometimes even, in doubtful cases, once a fortnight, but more frequently visits are paid at long intervals, and in some districts many of the homes are never visited at all. At a school in East London, for instance (and this is typical of many others), we were told that it is

<sup>1</sup> “Care Committee Work in Liverpool,” by F. J. Marquis, in the *School Child*, September, 1913, p. 11.

found in practice quite impossible for every case to be visited, since there are only two members of the Care Committee to undertake this work. A committee in another district reports, "visits in doubtful cases are made twice a year, supplemented by quarterly visits," while another committee in the same district reports that, "owing to the lack of sufficient help, it is often necessary to receive parents instead of visiting homes."

Still more difficult is it to obtain honorary secretaries. The functions of a Care Committee are, as we have seen, many and varied, and involve an enormous amount of work, if they are to be performed efficiently, especially in districts where few volunteers can be obtained and where, in consequence, a disproportionate amount of visiting falls to the lot of the secretary. The secretary of a Care Committee in Stepney found that it was necessary to give three quarters of her time to the work, and "even so, outside help had to be called in to keep the clerical work even approximately up to date."<sup>1</sup> The secretary of another school in East London informed us that he had to give four full days a week, besides some hours devoted to clerical work in the evening; while another secretary, in Central London, gives about four hours' work on an average five days a week. Obviously it is impossible to secure enough volunteers. Many who undertake the work of secretary find after a few months that they are obliged to give it up. The history of too many Care Committees is a record of ever-changing secretaries, interspersed with more or less prolonged interregna. In one district—and this appears to be typical of London as a whole—we were told that, out of 91 schools, some 10 or 15 were at the time without secretaries, and the duties had to be undertaken by the Assistant Organisers.

<sup>1</sup> "Care Committees," by A. S., in the *School Child*, March 1913, pp. 4-5.

These officials are already overburdened, and the result is that all but the most urgent work is left undone. Nothing is more disheartening for an energetic secretary who has laboured hard to effect some improvement in the condition of the children than to find, when forced by stress of circumstances to give up the work, that no one can be found to undertake the secretaryship and that, consequently, much of the devoted labour of months, perhaps of years, is undone.

The need for the appointment of paid secretaries for each school or group of schools was, as we have seen, pointed out as long ago as 1908.<sup>1</sup> Since that date the activities of the Care Committees have been enormously extended, and, in certain districts at any rate, if the work is to be done with any degree of efficiency, the necessity for such paid secretaries is becoming absolutely imperative.

But apart from the difficulty of securing enough voluntary workers, there are inherent disadvantages in the present system. The enquiry into the circumstances of the parents is not a duty for which the ordinary volunteer worker is fitted. And the necessity of making these enquiries may endanger those friendly relations which it is of such importance to establish between the visitor and the parent. The enquiry is generally totally inadequate. In the majority of cases the visitor is not trained for the purpose, and frequently finds this work distasteful. Each visitor has a different standard. No enquiry is made from the employer<sup>2</sup>; indeed, in the large number of cases where the father is casually employed such enquiry would be impracticable. In many cases there

<sup>1</sup> See ante, pp. 139-140.

<sup>2</sup> Enquiries from the employers may not be made by the Care Committee without the consent of the parent or guardian. Where the committee is doubtful of the accuracy of the parents' statements, the case can be referred to the Divisional Superintendent, who may make such enquiries.

is little or no knowledge of what other help is being given to the family. Many committees insist on the parents appearing before them to answer enquiries as to their circumstances. This is sometimes, as we have seen, rendered necessary by the lack of workers and the consequent impossibility of visiting the homes. But even if the homes are visited some committees consider that the obligation on the part of the parents to apply in person furnishes a test of the genuineness of their need. The attendance of the father, where it can be secured, is useful as it proves a means of bringing home to him his responsibility. It is not infrequently found that the mother has applied for meals without the husband's knowledge. On the other hand, as we have already shown, the insistence on the parents' attendance may result in considerable hardship to them, entailing perhaps the loss of half a day's work. They are often kept waiting for a considerable time. Moreover, the assembling of numbers together, all for the purpose of making application for meals, tends to diminish the sense of self-respect. For this reason many committees consider it undesirable to summon the parents, or they only summon them in special cases. When the parent is summoned and does not attend, the Council lays down that, if no immediate home visit is possible, a notice shall be sent to the parent that if he or she fails to attend before the committee or to show some good reason for not attending, the committee will be obliged to charge for the meals supplied to the children.<sup>1</sup> As far as we can discover, this is very rarely done. The far more usual course is for the committee to send a notice to the effect that the meals will be discontinued unless the parent appeals.

<sup>1</sup> London County Council, Handbook containing general information with reference to Children's Care, 1912, pp. 18-19.

Another disadvantage arising from the utilisation of the service of voluntary workers alone, is that no sufficient control can be exercised by the Central Authority to enforce a common policy. A certain amount of latitude is desirable so as to allow scope for individual initiative and experiment. But in the matter of selection of the children to be fed want of uniformity is wholly to be condemned. The diversity in methods that prevails is in effect amazing. In two schools situated almost side by side, and drawing their children from the same streets, the percentage fed may be, in the one case, two, in the other ten, fifteen or even more.<sup>1</sup> We have found this lack of uniformity in other towns, since the numbers fed depend very largely on the views taken by individual teachers, but in London there is superadded the diversity produced by the divergence of views of the different Care Committees. In one Care Committee the socialist element will be predominant. In another the work may be done on strictly "C.O.S." lines; the meals are regarded simply as a form of relief, and the feeding-list is cut down to the lowest limit.<sup>2</sup>

The County Council has not found it possible to lay down any uniform rule for the guidance of the committees.<sup>3</sup> Though, in a small number of cases, the com-

<sup>1</sup> Thus in three schools in South London, attended by children whose home circumstances were very similar, the majority of the parents being casual labourers, the percentages of children who were receiving free meals in March, 1913, were 1.8, 2.9 and 7.5. In another neighbouring school, where the children were very little poorer, nineteen per cent. were being fed.

<sup>2</sup> The most extreme example of the "strict" type is the committee which deals with a group of schools in St. George's-in-the-East. It is held that, the provision of meals being merely a form of relief, the work should be as far as possible dissociated from the school; the parents do not make application to the teachers but to a central office.

<sup>3</sup> "Having regard to the varying circumstances and conditions of families, it is considered undesirable to fix a minimum wage



mittee professes to have a scale, usually that laid down by Rowntree,<sup>1</sup> in practice this is a very rough criterion, frequently departed from, and the cases are all virtually decided on their merits. Moreover, the policy of the same Care Committee even will not always be a consistent one. The decision as to any particular case will vary with the presence or absence of particular members of the Committee.

Where children from the same family attend different schools—a frequent occurrence in London—meals may be granted at one school and refused at another. The County Council have issued elaborate regulations for ensuring that in such cases each Care Committee concerned shall know what the others are doing.<sup>2</sup> But though many Care Committees do communicate with one another, or notify cases to a Mutual Registration Committee, the County Council's instructions are frequently disregarded. The secretary of one committee informed us that during the whole time of her secretaryship—a period of over a year—she never once received any notification from another committee. Even where the cases are notified, it by no means follows that the several committees concerned adopt the same plan of action; often we have found that the one committee did not know in any particular case what the result of their notification had been. One secretary even told us that though all the committees in her district mutually notified cases to each other, this was solely for information; they which would justify children being provided with school meals, and each case should therefore be considered upon its own merits." (London County Council, Handbook containing general information with reference to Children's Care, 1912, p. 22.)

<sup>1</sup> That is, 3s. for an adult and 2s. 3d. for a child. (*Poverty*, by B. Seebohm Rowntree, 1901, p. 110.)

<sup>2</sup> Handbook containing general information with reference to Children's Care, 1912, p. 20.

pursued their own policy, merely noting that some of the children of the family were receiving meals at another school.<sup>1</sup>

To the parents this diversity of treatment of similar cases can only appear as capricious. Successive visits by the Care Committee visitors from different schools, all making the same enquiries, are a needless source of irritation to the parent, while being at the same time unnecessary expenditure of time and energy for the visitors. Attempts have been made in some districts to put an end to this waste of energy and overlapping. In Camberwell, two or three years ago, it was decided that the Care Committee visiting should be organised by streets instead of by schools. The Care Committees of the different schools all sent on their cases to the secretary of the organisation, who referred them to the visitor for the particular street.<sup>2</sup> This scheme worked very well for about eighteen months, but was then given up chiefly because the secretary could not continue the work. Now three Care Committees in this district have been amalgamated, so as to secure some measure of uniformity.<sup>3</sup> In a few other districts also, the Care Committees for groups of schools, though nominally separately appointed for each school, are in effect composed of the same people. Quite recently an attempt to prevent overlapping has been made by the County Council on a larger scale.

<sup>1</sup> The County Council, a few months ago, drew attention to the lack of uniformity prevailing. "In a number of cases it has been found that the form has not been issued, with the result that Care Committees dealing with part of a family are unacquainted with the relief afforded by another Care Committee." (*London County Council Gazette*, March 3, 1913, p. 210.)

<sup>2</sup> "School Care Committees," by Maude F. Davies, in *Progress*, July, 1910, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> At St. George's-in-the-East five committees have been amalgamated and then re-divided into two, one dealing with all the Jewish, one with all the Christian, children of the group. Overlapping is thus almost completely avoided.

In Whitechapel the Council have provided a Central Office where case papers will be kept, and paid assistants have been appointed who will notify to each Care Committee any assistance which is being given to the brothers and sisters of the children with whom they are dealing.

(e)—*The Provision for Paying Children*

The County Council from the first has not looked with approval on the proposal that meals should be provided as a matter of convenience to parents who are willing to pay for them. "Only cases of exceptional hardship," declared the Education Committee, "*e.g.*, children of widowers or of widows who are compelled, owing to their work, to be away from home all day—should be so dealt with."<sup>1</sup> In such cases payment must be made in advance and a week's notice be given, the full cost of the meals being charged.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, in most schools we find that no parents or only an insignificant number are voluntarily paying for the meals.<sup>3</sup> But that there is a certain demand for such provision is shown by the number of applications received where the Care Committee encourages such a plan. In one school, for instance, we were informed that a number of parents paid; sometimes when the children had been receiving free meals the parents wished the children to continue having them when the home circumstances improved, and were quite willing

<sup>1</sup> London County Council Minutes, November 2, 1909, p. 841.

<sup>2</sup> The charge includes the cost of preparation and service of the meals, and is calculated to the nearest farthing. (London County Council, Handbook containing general information with reference to Children's Care, 1912, pp. 27-28.)

<sup>3</sup> In 1912-13 the number of individual children who paid the full cost of the meals was 2,521, that is, only one-fortieth of the number of "necessitous" children who were fed. The amount so received was £863.

to pay the cost. In such cases they preferred the children to go to the Cookery Centre, this being looked on as superior to the feeding-centre. In another district we were told that, though there was a demand on the part of the parents, this was not encouraged, partly because the staff of supervisors was inadequate to cope with larger numbers. There is frequently an unfortunate difference in the treatment of the paying and the non-paying children. At one centre, for instance, the "necessitous" children are placed at one table, and are supplied with food provided by the Alexandra Trust; the paying children are placed at another and are given food cooked at the Cookery Centre. At another school we were told that the paying children were fed at one end of the room, the necessitous children at the other; incidentally the paying children had to stand, since there were no chairs available, while the necessitous children sat on forms. In several schools the parents pay for milk or codliver oil when this is recommended by the doctor. In at least one school, however, we were told that though some of the parents would be willing to pay for this milk, it was too much trouble to collect the money, so no payment was asked. In one or two schools milk is provided for any child who likes to pay a halfpenny, and this provision is very largely taken advantage of.

In the special schools for mentally defective children, where the provision of meals is carried on on the same lines as in the ordinary elementary schools, the proportion of children who pay for the meals is greater, since, owing to the distance from school of many of the children's homes, provision has to be made for non-necessitous as well as necessitous. In the Cripple Schools special provision has for many years been made by the Cripple Children's Dinners Committee. This body provides the food, the County Council supplying the apparatus and

attendance. Dinners are supplied for all the children at a charge of 2d. each. The parents appear thoroughly to appreciate the provision made, and the great majority of them pay the full cost, only a few of the children receiving the dinner free or at a reduced price.<sup>1</sup>

(f)—*The Service of the Meals*

The results of the half-hearted fashion in which London undertook the responsibility for its underfed children are seen nowhere more clearly than in the arrangements made for serving the meals. The County Council seems to have been actuated throughout rather by the desire to keep the expense down to the minimum than to supply the children with the most suitable food and to see that the meals were served under civilising conditions. In the early years after the Council took over the provision, the Local Committees were left to make the best arrangements that they could. Little encouragement was given them in any endeavour to provide wholesome and varied meals under conditions likely to exercise an educational influence over the children. Still less was any attempt made to enforce such a policy. The reports are almost silent on this aspect of the question, though the scanty references which are to be found show a far from satisfactory state of affairs. In 1908, for instance, it was reported that at thirty schools, where 3,090 children were fed, plates and mugs were not provided. "This has meant generally," reports the Executive Officer, "that the children brought their own mugs and ate the food out of their hands." In twenty other schools insufficient

<sup>1</sup> In 1911-12 the expenditure on food materials amounted to £4,273 2s. od., and the payments for dinners to £4,206 15s. 9d. Out of a total of 523,266 dinners supplied, only 33,043, or 6·3 per cent., were given free. The average cost of the dinner, for food materials only, was 1·96d. (Report of Cripple Children's Dinners Committee for 1911-12, pp. 10, 11.)

provision was made for washing up the utensils used and, "as food was served to the children in successive relays, two or more children used each drinking vessel or plate before it had been washed." "The usual meal has been a dinner of soup (sometimes containing meat), with, in certain cases, a form of pudding as an alternative. In the great majority of cases this was the daily meal for months without variety."<sup>1</sup> The Care Committee organisers, in their Report on the Home Circumstances of Necessitous Children in the same year, remark that, considering "the poor accommodation and the inferior quality of the meals often provided for the children," together with the fact that the highest average number of meals per child was 4.4 per week, it could not be expected that there would be much noticeable improvement in the physical condition of the children."<sup>2</sup>

Since the formation of the Local Associations of Care Committees in 1909 conditions have improved, but they are still far from satisfactory. As we have already mentioned, these Associations were formed in order to introduce some measure of uniformity into the work of feeding the necessitous children of the metropolis. They were from henceforth to be responsible for the arrangements made for the actual serving of the meals. The selection of a suitable centre rests with them, and it is their duty to arrange for the requisite supply of food and for the proper service of the meals and supervision of the children during the meal time.

The food may be supplied by the Alexandra Trust, a local caterer, a cookery centre or a kitchen managed by the Local Association. The quality of the food varies according to the arrangements made by each Local

<sup>1</sup> London County Council, Agenda for Sub-Committee on Underfed Children, Appendix A., July 6, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> London County Council, Report on the Home Circumstances of Necessitous Children in twelve selected schools, 1908, p. 25.

Association. The food specially prepared for the Jewish children appears to be generally good. At the cookery centres again, though complaints are occasionally heard that the dinners are badly cooked, they are as a rule appetising, and the menu is varied. The great majority of the meals are, however, supplied by the Alexandra Trust. Ten different dinner menus have been drawn up by this Trust, with a slight variation for summer,<sup>1</sup> but in practice there is very little variety, practically the same dietary being repeated week after week; usually there is a deficiency of proteids and fats. The quantity supplied for each child varies considerably in different centres. In one that we visited, for instance, each child was given a large helping of suet pudding with minced meat, followed by a large plateful of rice, and second helpings were given if required; at another, where the dinner consisted of only one course, with a piece of bread, the portions were very small; the cook admitted that some of the children could eat more, but if any were allowed a second helping all would ask for it, whether they wanted it or not, and the food would then be left uneaten.

How far the infants' needs are specially catered for depends on each Local Association. Sometimes they are fed by themselves at the Cookery Centre, where it is easier to provide suitable food and to pay individual attention to their wants. More often they go with the elder children to the feeding-centres. The Alexandra Trust has drawn up a special menu for infants, and in centres where the food is supplied otherwise than by the Trust the Council have instructed the Local Association to make special provision.<sup>2</sup> But it is rare to find any such provision made. As a rule the infants have the same food as the elder children, though in

<sup>1</sup> For menus, see Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of London County Council, December 20, 1910, p. 1491.

centres where there is careful supervision, and where the infants are placed at a separate table,<sup>1</sup> the size of the helping is suited to their appetites. In many centres the number of infants is so few as to make the preparation of a separate diet hardly worth while, and the provision of special food has been known to give rise to jealousy on the part of the elder children.

Ordinarily one meal a day is provided, this meal being almost invariably dinner, but in cases of special necessity or delicacy an additional meal may be given. This meal may be either breakfast, milk or codliver oil. The practice varies in each school. In some schools breakfast is never given, or given only in very rare cases. In others breakfasts as well as dinners are given to the most necessitous children. At St. George's-in-the-East formerly only breakfasts were given, but now dinners are given in addition to all the children on the feeding-list; the breakfast is used as a test, the theory being that if the child does not come for breakfast it shall not receive dinner, but in practice this plan is not strictly carried out. Milk and codliver oil are given in most schools, when recommended by the School Doctor; in some schools milk is also given on economic grounds, as an additional meal to specially necessitous children, instead of breakfast. In a few schools a quantity of milk is supplied in the middle of the morning, and any child who pays a halfpenny can have it, the children, especially the infants, being encouraged to spend their halfpence on milk instead of on sweets.

Where no other suitable accommodation is available, the meals may be served in the School Hall, but this

<sup>1</sup> Frequently the infants are placed with the older children at the ordinary tables, which are too high for them to reach up to with any comfort; it is sometimes impossible for them to eat without spilling their food. (See the description of a feeding centre, post, p. 167.)



method is not encouraged by the Council, and is frequently objected to by the teachers, and it is only occasionally utilised. Often, as we have already mentioned, the meals are served in the cookery centres, but the number of children that can be thus accommodated is necessarily limited, and the centre may be closed during the summer. Till recently some Local Associations arranged for their children to be sent to small eating-houses. We have already pointed out the disadvantages—the impossibility of making the meal in any sense educational, and the lack of control over the dietary—inherent, even under the most favourable conditions, in this system. But in London, in many of these cookshops, the conditions were the reverse of favourable; they could, indeed, only be described as deplorable. For instance, at one eating-house, where the children were sent for their dinners up to the spring of 1912, the room used was hardly larger than a cupboard, and only six or eight children could be fed at a time; the children had to go in relays and, when the numbers were very large, had to sit on the stairs eating their food. In others the conditions were equally bad. The plan of utilising restaurants is, we are glad to say, falling into disfavour, but it is not yet entirely abandoned.

The most usual method is for the children to be sent to centres. These centres are frequently basement rooms, dark and cheerless. Occasionally plants or flowers are provided, but it is very rare to find any attempt at table decoration. Since the average cost of serving the meals is much less proportionately if the number of children is large, the County Council has, for the sake of economy, decided that, where possible, schools shall be grouped, and the children from them fed at one centre.<sup>1</sup> As we

<sup>1</sup> London County Council, Handbook containing general information with reference to Children's Care, 1912, p. 31.

have already pointed out, the herding together of large numbers of children from different schools deprives the meal of much of its educational value. The children from the different schools will come in at different times. Often the centre is not large enough for them all to be accommodated at once, and they have to be served in relays, with the consequence that the meal must be hurried through. They are usually seated at long tables, and are often crowded together, so that adequate supervision is rendered very difficult.

The supervision is occasionally undertaken voluntarily by teachers, and in many centres by other voluntary workers. Where their regular attendance can be secured the good results are soon apparent. But the visits of voluntary supervisors are too often irregular, and it may happen that no one is present to supervise the meal, except the women who serve the food. In many districts it is impossible to obtain the services of volunteers at all, and paid supervisors are appointed.<sup>1</sup> These may be assistant teachers, retired teachers or other suitable persons. One supervisor may be appointed for every hundred children, but frequently the number to be looked after by one supervisor far exceeds a hundred. Thus, in three centres we visited, there were 140 to 160 children present, whilst in two others the numbers were well over two hundred; in all these there was only one supervisor.

The County Council has drawn up regulations for the management of the centres,<sup>2</sup> but these regulations are largely disregarded. The Council, for instance, has laid it down that boys and girls are to be appointed to act as monitors, to assist in laying the tables and serving the meals. In many centres this is not even attempted,

<sup>1</sup> The payment is 7s. 6d. a week. (*Ibid.*, p. 34.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

and occasionally where their services are utilised, owing to the large number of children present, the supervisor is ~~unable~~ to devote much attention to the training of the monitors, and their presence rather adds to the prevailing confusion than conduces to the orderly and quiet service of the meal. Another of the Council's regulations directs that a separate mug shall be provided for each child.<sup>1</sup> But it appears to be the exception rather than the rule for this instruction to be observed. Though a sufficient supply of mugs is, or can on application be, supplied for every centre, the women who serve the meals, being only employed and paid for a fixed time, object to the extra labour involved in washing up. Frequently no mugs are placed on the table at all, though we were told that the children could have water if they asked for it ; when mugs are provided there is often only one to every two or three children, perhaps to every five or six ! At one centre that we visited, though the girls were allowed mugs, the boys were not trusted, and mugs of water were placed on a side table for their indiscriminate use after the meal.

The actual management of each centre varies, of course, very largely according to the personality of the supervisor. We have visited some two or three centres where all the arrangements were admirable ; the children were quiet and well-behaved, there was little or no waste of food, and attention was paid to individual wants. But these cases are unfortunately exceptional. Out of twenty centres in different parts of London that we have seen,<sup>2</sup> in at least half the educational advantages to be derived from the common meal are imper-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup> These centres were all visited in the spring, summer or autumn of 1913. We describe some typical examples in the Appendix to this chapter.

fectly realised.<sup>1</sup> In a few cases the supervisors appear to consider this aspect as but of secondary importance. So long as the children are fed and some sort of rough order preserved, they are satisfied. The meal may be eaten in a babel of noise. Food which the children do not fancy they will throw on the floor, little attempt being made to prevent waste. But in any case, in many centres, owing to the large number of children to be attended to, the task of inculcating table manners is an almost impossible one. Though the supervisors do their utmost, for instance, to teach the children to use spoons and forks, it is not uncommon to observe children eating with their fingers—even occasionally licking their plates! It is impossible for the supervisor to give that individual attention which is absolutely essential if the meal is to be in any sense educational.

(g)—*Overlapping with the Poor Law Authority*

We have already described the extent to which, in the provinces, the provision of meals by the Local Education Authority overlaps the granting of relief by the Poor Law Authorities. London is no exception to the general rule. In 1908 it was found that out of 1,218 families investigated, 3.2 per cent. were at the time in receipt of out-relief, while 13.54 per cent. had recently been receiving such relief.<sup>2</sup> In February, 1910, it was reported that, of the children who were being fed all over London, 4.6 per cent. were from families to whom Poor Law relief

In 1911, as the result of an inspection of all the feeding centres by the school doctors, it was reported that "in one-fifth . . . the conditions required material improvement, to make the giving of these meals an educational function, and to impress the hygiene of proper eating and cleanliness on the children." (Annual Report of the London County Council for 1911, Vol. III., p. 170.)

<sup>1</sup> London County Council, Report on the Home Circumstances of Necessitous Children in twelve selected schools, 1908, p. 22.

was being granted.<sup>1</sup> The confusion was the greater since the practice of the Guardians varied in each Union. "There is no uniformity of policy or action amongst the Boards," reports the Education Committee of the County Council in 1910. "For example, there could hardly be a wider divergence of principle and practice between public bodies than that which exists between such Boards as Paddington, Fulham, and St. George's-in-the-East on the one hand, and Islington and Poplar on the other. In the case of Fulham, the Guardians, when assessing the relief to be granted, take into account the extent to which school meals are already being supplied to children of the family . . . but in the case of Poplar, the Guardians have informed the various school Care Committees that 'the fact that a family is in receipt of poor law relief should not be considered as a reason for the children not being supplied with meals.'"<sup>2</sup> To put an end to all this overlapping and diversity of practice, the Council proposed that the Guardians should purchase school meals for the children of families who were in receipt of relief. The Local Government Board, however, declined to agree to this course. In practice, they thought, it was hardly possible to avoid all difficulty of overlapping, "though it should be feasible, with careful administration, to restrict it within reasonable limits"; the only suggestion they offered towards the solution of the difficulty was that, if it appeared to the Education Authority that a child whose parents were receiving out-relief required supervision by the Guardians, the Education Authority should communicate with the Guardians with a view to an investigation of the circum-

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of London County Council for 1910, Chapter XLI., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the London County Council, February 15, 1910, p. 175.

stances.<sup>1</sup> This suggestion was acted upon, and the Care Committees were instructed in future to notify to the Guardians all cases in which, to their knowledge, necessitous children belonged to families in receipt of poor law relief.<sup>2</sup> But such notification had little practical result. The Guardians continued to grant inadequate relief, and the Council felt compelled to continue to provide these children with food. How necessary school meals were was, indeed, clearly shown by a resolution of the Hammersmith Guardians, who themselves actually declared that, "when school children's parents are in receipt of outdoor relief, that fact should in general be taken as an indication that such children would be benefited by school meals, and not as an indication that they are adequately fed, since, as a matter of fact, outdoor relief is seldom or never adequate"! <sup>3</sup>

Though the Council's proposal that the Boards of Guardians should repay the cost of the meals was rejected by the Local Government Board, as far as London generally was concerned, individual Boards have agreed to the plan. In Lambeth and Chelsea the Guardians have consented to pay the cost of meals supplied to the children of parents who are receiving out-relief, if they consider that school meals are necessary.<sup>4</sup> At Hampstead, where the funds for the provision of school meals are supplied by the Council of Social Welfare,<sup>5</sup> an informal arrangement has been made with the Guardians. Where the mother can stay at home and can be trusted to expend the relief given in food for the children, the Guardians have agreed to give ample relief. Where the mother goes

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, July 26-27, 1910, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *London County Council Gazette*, May 29, 1911, p. 370.

<sup>3</sup> *School Child*, February, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of London County Council, November 5, 1912, p. 1093; *London County Council Gazette*, January 20, 1913, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> See ante, p. 141 n.

out to work or cannot be trusted to feed the children properly, or where it is undesirable for the children to go home, the Council of Social Welfare pays for school dinners.

But as a rule no definite arrangement is made. A few Care Committees refuse to feed children whose parents are receiving relief, but in the great majority of schools cases are to be found where children are being fed by the Care Committee, while their parents are being relieved by the Guardians.<sup>1</sup> Frequently no official communication passes between the two authorities concerned. The Guardians may learn indirectly through the Relieving Officer, or perhaps through some member of their Board who happens also to be a member of the Care Committee, that the latter are feeding the children. Where a system of mutual registration has been established, each authority will, theoretically, be informed of what the other is doing. How far all cases are actually notified will depend on the secretary of each individual Care Committee. And this system of mutual registration does not prevent overlapping in many cases where the children are on the feeding-list for a short time only, since cases are often notified only once a month, by which time the necessity for feeding may have ceased. Occasionally the Guardians ask the Care Committee to inform them if they discover any cases where the relief appears inadequate, so that they may increase it, if necessary. In other Unions the Guardians deliberately count on the provision of school meals to supplement the relief given; they tell the parents to apply for dinners and grant less relief in consequence, thereafter priding themselves on keeping down the rates.

<sup>1</sup> Most of the cases of overlapping are, of course, cases in which the Guardians are granting out-relief. There are also the cases where the Guardians are relieving a widow by maintaining some of her children in Poor Law schools, but the mother has not sufficient income adequately to maintain the remaining child or children.

## APPENDIX

## EXAMPLES OF FEEDING CENTRES IN LONDON

*(a)—School, visited October, 1913*

Here the dinner is served in the Infants' School in a room at the top of the building. Some sixty infants, all attending the school, were being fed. They entered the room two by two and sat down together at low tables on specially small chairs. Two teachers were present throughout the meal; they served the food, and four of the children handed it round. Perfect order was kept, and at the end of the meal all the children rose together, and, after saying grace, marched out quietly. The food is cooked on the premises, the menu being drawn up by one of the teachers and varied every day. The whole meal was served in as attractive a manner as possible, and testified eloquently to the care and thought which must have been spent on its organisation.

*(b)—School, visited June, 1913*

Here the meal is served in the school hall. The Headmistress much objects to this plan, since it leaves the atmosphere close and stuffy all the afternoon. Moreover, the bringing in of the tables and forms, an operation which has to be begun twenty minutes before the end of morning school, causes a considerable commotion. On the day of our visit 160 children, boys, girls and infants, were receiving dinner. For this number there were only one supervisor and two servers, assisted by five or six monitresses chosen from among the elder children. As a result of this inadequate supervision the meal was served in a perfect babel of noise; the children shouted and screamed and banged their spoons on the table. A bell was rung at intervals throughout the meal to obtain silence, but no attention was paid to it. The fact that there was a deficiency of seating accommodation heightened the confusion. At the end of each table a child had to stand, and those sitting down were crowded much too closely together. Separate tables were reserved for the infants, of whom there were a large number, some of them tiny mites of three years old. The tables, however, were not specially adapted for them, being of the ordinary height. In consequence many of the little ones had considerable difficulty in feeding themselves, their heads only just appearing above the table, and, of course, nobody had time to attend to their wants. It is only fair to add that we saw the centre at a particularly unfortunate time, since the super-



visor had only taken over the work a few days prior to our visit, and therefore had not yet obtained a firm hold over the children. The noise, we were told, was usually not so great.

(c)—*Centre, visited May, 1913*

This centre, attended by children from two neighbouring schools, is a striking illustration of what can be effected by patient and careful supervision. At the time of our visit this work was being performed by an assistant teacher, but before her appointment the secretary or some other member of the Care Committee daily supervised the meal for two years. The meal was served in a large, cheerful room. No tablecloths were supplied; at one time flowers were provided, much to the joy of the children, but it was found impossible to continue this practice. The children were seated at small tables, some eight or ten at each, an arrangement which renders the work of supervision very much easier. There were no infants present, as these are sent to the Cookery Centre. A boy or girl was responsible for each table; they handed round the food, paying attention to the individual appetites of the children. No waste of food was permitted, the children being kept till they had finished. The whole scene, the quiet and orderly behaviour of the children and their consideration for one another's wants, left a most pleasing impression upon the mind. At the date of our visit the numbers were small, only some 50 children being present, but we were told that their behaviour was quite as orderly even in winter, when the numbers were much larger.

(d)—*Centre, visited March, 1913*

This centre is a large basement room in a Mission Hall, dark and unattractive, accommodating between 200 and 300 children. It serves several neighbouring schools, and the numbers on the day of our visit were too large to admit of all the children sitting down together. As each child came in and gave up its ticket, it seized a spoon and fork from a pile on a table near the door, and rushed to its place. When about half the children were seated, grace was sung or rather shouted, and then the food was brought in and literally flung on to the table by the server and one or two of the elder boys. Though the numbers were so large there was only one supervisor, though we were told that occasionally one of the sisters from the neighbouring settlement came to help. With such inadequate supervision it was, of course, impossible to teach table manners. The children, the boys especially, gobbled down their dinner, amid a hubbub of noise, and hurried out as soon as they had finished, other boys rushing in to take their places. No special provision was made

for the infants; they were placed with the other children and were given the same food. No attention was paid to individual appetites and much of the food, we were told, was wasted.

(e)—*Centre, visited June, 1913*

This is a centre for Jewish children, serving three or four neighbouring schools. The room not being large enough to accommodate all the children at once, two relays are necessary, even in summer. Over 200 children were present, but there was only one supervisor, assisted by four or five women. The children entered in an orderly fashion and seated themselves at the table, none being allowed to begin the meal till all were seated. The infants were placed at a separate table; they are given special food when the dietary provided for the other children is not suitable for them. Some of the elder girls acted as monitors and helped to serve the food and clear up afterwards. Unfortunately, owing to the fact that other children were waiting to come in, the meal was necessarily hurried, the second course being placed on the table while the children were still eating the first course. Though the order maintained was wonderful, considering the large numbers present, it was impossible to attend adequately to the children's manners; many of them were using their fingers, and there appeared to be considerable waste of food.

(f)—*Centre, visited October, 1913*

This is another centre for Jewish children. The dinner was served in a large, dreary parish hall, to some 200 or 300 children. There was one supervisor and four servers, while tickets were taken by the caretaker. Order was well preserved, but only by means of the frequent ringing of a bell, and by the enforcement of absolute silence. The supervisor said that if the children were allowed to talk the noise would be unbearable. Before being given their food, the children were told to hold up their hands if they were "big eaters," the margin of waste being minimised in this way. Although the manners and behaviour of the children could not be said to be bad, the whole effect was singularly unattractive—the bare room, the large numbers, and the frequent shouted commands and rebukes of the supervisor leaving no scope for humanising and educational influences.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EXTENT AND CAUSES OF MALNUTRITION

“DEFECTIVE nutrition,” Sir George Newman points out, “stands in the forefront as the most important of all physical defects from which school children suffer.”<sup>1</sup> Malnutrition, ‘debility’ and other physical defects in childhood “are the ancestry of tuberculosis in the adult. They predispose to disease, and are, in a sense, both its seed and its soil.”<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to give any figures as to the extent of this defect, since nutrition is not a condition which can be measured by any definite standards. The weight of the child is, of course, a most important matter to be noted, but there are other points—“the ratio of stature to weight ; the general appearance, carriage and ‘substance’ of the child ; the firmness of the tissues ; the presence of subcutaneous fat ; the development of the muscular system ; the condition of the skin and redness of the mucous membranes ; the expression of listlessness or alertness, apathy or keenness ; the condition of the various systems of the body ; and, speaking generally, the relative balance and co-ordination of the functions and powers of digestion, absorption and assimilation of food.”<sup>3</sup> Each observer adopts a different standard of what constitutes

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

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good nutrition, and hence the statistics given in the reports of the School Medical Officers cannot be used for comparative purposes. According to the latest figures, as quoted by the President of the Board of Education, 10 per cent. of the elementary school children of England and Wales suffer from defective nutrition.<sup>1</sup> Many of the School Medical Officers, however, have obviously adopted a low standard and Mr. Arthur Greenwood, who has made a careful enquiry into this subject, is of opinion that, "taking the country as a whole, not merely 10 per cent., but probably a number approaching 20 per cent., show perceptible signs of malnutrition."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that the degeneration is progressive. In an enquiry conducted by Dr. Arkle at Liverpool, 2,111 children from three elementary schools were compared, as to height and weight, with 366 children from secondary schools. The results (see accompanying table) showed that at practically every age the heights and weights of the children varied directly with the class from which they were drawn, and the deficit increased out of proportion to the rate of growth. "These figures," he points out, "are rendered all the more striking when one considers that one is talking of children and not of full-grown men. A difference of a stone in the weight of two men may not be a very great matter, but when the investigation shows such a discrepancy between two groups of boys of eleven, it means that one of the groups is deficient to the extent of one-fifth of the whole body weight, and the decadence is so progressive that the deficiency has by fourteen years

<sup>1</sup> *Hansard*, April 10, 1913, Vol. 51, p. 1381; *The Health and Physique of School Children*, by Arthur Greenwood, 1913, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

of age almost reached a quarter of the whole body weight."<sup>1</sup>

This malnutrition is to be attributed to many causes besides actual lack of food. Improper food and hurried methods of eating account for much malnutrition. So much has been written on the subject of the wrong feeding of children that it seems unnecessary to labour this point. One can, indeed, hardly open a report of a School Medical Officer without finding this evil deplored. In the poorest homes there are frequently no fixed meal times ; the children are given " a piece " when they are hungry, and this is often eaten in the street or on the doorstep. Bread and tea figure largely in the dietary. Supper is frequently the principal meal of the day, with resulting indigestion for the children.

Employment out of school hours and want of sleep are again important factors. Indeed, in the eyes of some School Medical Officers, malnutrition is due more to want of sleep than to lack of food. The children are almost invariably kept up till late at night, it being a rare exception to find a child being sent to bed at anything approaching a reasonable hour.

A still more potent cause, perhaps, is to be found in bad housing conditions. Striking testimony as to the relation between the physique of school children and housing was adduced by Dr. Leslie Mackenzie and Captain

<sup>1</sup> " The Medical Examination of School Children," by Dr. A. S. Arkle, a paper read at the North of England Education Conference, January, 1907 (reprinted in *School Government Chronicle*, Supplement, January 12, 1907, pp. 77, 89). As we have already said, the nutrition cannot be determined solely by weight. " In fact," as a School Medical Officer points out, " an ill-nourished child may be above the average weight, or, on the other hand, a healthy child may be much under the average and yet not be ill-nourished." (Report of the School Medical Officer for Leeds for 1910, p. 27.) But when dealing with large numbers of children, the average weight furnishes a reliable index of nutrition.

# Heights and Weights of 366 Children from Secondary Schools and 2,111 from Elementary Schools in Liverpool.

## AVERAGE HEIGHT.

			BOYS.				GIRLS.			
"	7½ ..	..	4	0.7	3	0.77	3	0.11	3	4
"	8 ..	..	4	0.7	3	4.44	3	3.64	3	1.87
"	8½ ..	..	3	10.5	3	5	3	5.2	3	3.3
"	9 ..	..	4	3.5	3	11.33	3	8.85	3	6.38
"	9½ ..	..	4	5.4	3	9.35	3	11.16	3	9.5
"	10 ..	..	4	10.03	3	13.1	3	11	4	—
"	10½ ..	..	4	12.76	4	0.43	4	0.6	3	12.37
"	11 ..	..	5	0.27	4	5.45	4	3.05	3	13.5
"	11½ ..	..	5	4.75	4	6.8	4	4.79	4	2.3
"	12 ..	..	5	7.05	4	10.6	4	7.92	4	6.05
"	12½ ..	..	5	4	4	13	4	11.5	4	7.73
"	13 ..	..	6	4.25	5	3.42	4	12.75	5	0.3
"	13½ ..	..	6	1.72	5	4.26	4	12.5	5	0.63
"	14 ..	..	6	10.5	5	5.82	5	5.87	5	1.14

A is a school where the parents were comparatively well-to-do and the children mostly had comfortable homes.  
 B is a school where the parents were mostly small shopkeepers or labourers in constant employment.  
 C is a school where the parents were mostly unemployed or casually employed.



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Foster, as a result of an enquiry into the condition of 72,857 school children in Glasgow. "If we take all the children of ages from 5 to 18," they report, "we find that the average weight of the one-roomed boy is 52·6 lbs. ; of the two-roomed, 56·1 lbs. ; of the three-roomed, 60·6 lbs. ; of the four-roomed and over, 64·3 lbs. The respective heights are 46·6 inches ; 48·1 inches ; 50·0 inches and 51·3 inches. For girls the corresponding figures are :—Weights, 51·5 lbs. ; 54·8 lbs. ; 59·4 lbs. ; 65·5 lbs. The heights are 46·3 inches ; 47·8 inches ; 49·6 inches ; 57·6 inches." <sup>1</sup>

At East Ham also the nutrition of the children was found to vary in accordance with the number of rooms : —<sup>2</sup>

Number of Rooms;				Number of Children Examined;	Percentage with Nutritional Defects.
Children from 2 and 3-roomed					
houses	..	..	..	255	17·2
4-roomed houses	..	..	..	486	16·7
5-roomed houses	..	..	..	657	13·2
6-roomed houses	..	..	..	1,486	13·5
Number of Persons per Room;					
Less than one	..	..	..	877	9·2
One	..	..	..	576	15·4
Between one and two	..	..	..	1,379	15·2
Two and more	..	..	..	181	17·7

The interpretation of these tables, as the School Medical Officer points out, must be guarded. But, he continues, "I think it is safe to assume that nutrition . . . suffered the more confined the individual."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report by Dr. Leslie Mackenzie and Captain A. Foster, on the Physical Condition of Children attending the Public Schools of the School Board of Glasgow, 1907, p. v.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for East Ham for 1911, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.



Actual physical defects, such as decayed teeth,<sup>1</sup> adenoids or enlarged tonsils, or definite diseases, such as phthisis, may account for malnutrition in many cases. Want of cleanliness again may be a cause.<sup>2</sup>

The precise effect to be attributed to each cause is difficult to estimate. Often, of course, two or more factors will be present, concurrently and interdependently. In an enquiry made in 1910 by Dr. Chate, into the condition of 570 children (307 boys and 263 girls) in a rural or semi-rural district of Middlesex who were suffering from malnutrition, it was found that poverty was the principal cause in 29.5 per cent. of the cases among the boys, and 26.1 per cent. among the girls. Adenoids, worms, rickets, carious teeth and oral sepsis accounted for 32.7 per cent. among the boys, and 33.3 per cent. among the girls. Improper diet was the main cause in 2.3 per cent. of the cases. In 69 cases malnutrition was due to some disease such as tuberculosis, chronic bronchitis, etc., while in 13 cases it was attributed to overcrowding, and in 10 cases to overwork with insufficient

<sup>1</sup> The School Medical Officer for Cumberland found that whilst, at the age of 3 to 4, 28.4 per cent. of the boys and 38.7 per cent. of the girls were classified as good, "the percentages diminish gradually till at the age of 7 to 8 they are only 12.8 and 15.9, but from 20.4 and 29.7 at the age of 12 to 13 they gradually rise to 36.0 and 34.6 at the age of 14 to 15. Probably in most cases the condition of the teeth is responsible for this falling off in condition. In the early years of life, before the teeth begin to go bad, the nutrition is good, but gradually gets worse as time goes on and more teeth decay, but nutrition again improves after the eruption of the permanent teeth, which, of course, are in the majority of cases sound for some little time." (Report of the School Medical Officer for Cumberland for 1911, p. 20.)

<sup>2</sup> "The cleanliness of the houses and especially of the bedrooms . . . has an important bearing on nutrition." (Report of the School Medical Officer for Congleton for 1911, p. 4.) A School Medical Officer in London told us that if a child improved in the point of cleanliness there was a marked improvement also in nutrition.

sleep.<sup>1</sup> In the following year a similar enquiry was made by Dr. Tate in a suburban residential area of the same county. Out of 167 cases, defective nutrition was found to be due to poverty and neglect in 23·3 per cent. ; to rickets, adenoids, worms or digestive disorder in 28·5 per cent. ; to lung affection in 5·4 per cent. ; in 7·2 per cent. malnutrition " appeared to be associated with some previous or present condition of ill-health, to account for which no organic mischief could be found at the time of inspection " ; while in 33 instances no obvious cause could be assigned.<sup>2</sup>

At Bootle the School Medical Officer reports that out of 289 cases of sub-normal nutrition, the cause is to be sought in 78 per cent. in some definite disease or physical defect (including disturbances of digestion due to improper feeding) ; in 17 per cent. there are no definite signs of organic disease ; while in 5 per cent. malnutrition is due to neglect.<sup>3</sup>

At Wolverhampton Dr. Badger reports that, out of 131 cases, malnutrition is due to the influence or reaction of disease, convalescence from recent disease, or defective heredity in 64 ; to pampering in 4 ; to excessive growth in 1 ; to overwork and insufficient sleep in 11 ; to ignorance and poverty in 25 ; while in 26 cases there was strong evidence of neglect, dirt or drink.<sup>4</sup> In his opinion, an opinion based upon a comparison of the clothing and footgear of the malnourished and normal children, " the malnutrition of the scholars examined was not primarily due to poverty."<sup>5</sup> This, as Sir George Newman points

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, pp. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, for 1911, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Bootle for 1912, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Wolverhampton for 1911, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

out, "may well have been the case, but the fact that the examinations were 'routine' in character, when the children are apt to be specially dressed and boots even borrowed for the occasion, makes this particular item, unless subjected to further analysis, of little or no value as a criterion in forming a judgment as to the relation of poverty to the malnutrition."<sup>1</sup>

Other School Medical Officers are of the same opinion as Dr. Badger. At Congleton the School Medical Officer visited the homes of a considerable number of children whose nutrition was defective, with a view to ascertaining the cause of their condition. He found that "actual poverty of the parents and inability to provide food was comparatively rare, that neglect was common, and unsuitable food probably the most frequent cause."<sup>2</sup> At Hornsey in the majority of cases "some definite ailment was apparent to explain, at least partially, the condition. There were very few instances in which it could be certainly stated that insufficiency of food was the sole cause."<sup>3</sup> At Manchester "the vast majority" of children whose nutrition was medium "and many of those who were poorly nourished were not in this condition through want of food. . . . Each year's work adds to the evidence that poverty is not responsible for more than about 50 per cent. of the cases."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the School Medical Officer for Kidderminster reports, "I find that the better condition of trade and employment in the town was reflected in the improved nutrition of the

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Congleton for 1911, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Hornsey for 1911, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for 1911, in Report of the Manchester Education Committee, 1910-11, p. 242.

children. . . . This also tends to show that the majority of cases of defective nutrition arise, not from carelessness and inattention on the part of the parents, but from inability on their part to provide the children with sufficient nourishment owing to want of means."<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed impossible to say how much malnutrition is due to poverty. Though the immediate cause may be disease, overwork, or overcrowding, these evils are themselves largely the result of insufficient means.

The relation between the malnutrition of the children and the amount of the family income is strikingly illustrated by the results of an enquiry recently made into the diet of the labouring classes in Glasgow. A careful study was made of the family diet of certain selected families during a week, or in some cases a fortnight, and the energy value of each diet expressed in terms of the requirements of a man per day, a woman or a boy of 14 to 16 being reckoned as equivalent to .8 of a man, a girl of 14 to 16 as .7, and children of 10 to 13, 6 to 9, 2 to 5, and under 2 respectively as .6, .5, .4, .3. "If a family diet expressed in this way gives a yield of energy of less than 3,500 calories per man per day, it is insufficient for active work, and if less than 3,000 calories, it is quite inadequate for the proper maintenance of growth and of normal activity."<sup>2</sup>

"Taking the average intake of energy and of protein in the various groups [comprising 52 families], the results are as follows :—

<sup>1</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Kidderminster for 1911, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Report upon a Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in the City of Glasgow carried out during 1911-12, by Dorothy E. Lindsay, B.Sc., 1913, pp. 5-6.

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Group A.	[Income regular, average 39s.]	Energy: Protein.
	(excluding LIX. abnormal)	.. 3,184 113.8
Group B.	[Income regular, lodgers kept, average 43s.]	.. 3,316 111.7
Group C.	[Income regular, between 27s. & 31s.]	3,467 118
Group D.	[ " " " 20s. & 25s.]	3,456 117.7
Group E.	[ " " under 20s.]	.. 2,690 97.8
Group F.	[Income irregular, over 20s.]	.. 2,994 108
	(excluding XLIV. abnormal)	.. 2,784 101.4
Group G.	[Income irregular, under 20s.]	.. 2,797 96.6
Group H.	[ " " father drinks]	.. 3,155 103.9
	or, excluding XXVII. abnormal	.. 2,921 95.6

These figures show conclusively that, while the labouring classes with a regular income of over 20s. a week generally manage to secure a diet approaching the proper standard for active life, *those with a smaller income and those with an irregular income entirely fail to get a supply of food sufficient for the proper development and growth of the body or for the maintenance of a capacity for active work.*"<sup>1</sup> "An interesting point in connection with these studies is the influence of the diet on the physical condition of the children." The weights of a number of children which were obtained "show very markedly the relationship between the physique and the food. *When the weight is much below the average for that age, almost without exception the diet is inadequate.*"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27. The numbers in each group are so small that the average does not furnish a reliable index, but that the conclusion drawn from the figures is warranted is shown by the fact that of the 27 families in the first four groups (excluding one case where the circumstances are abnormal), 8 have a dietary yielding over 3,500 calories of energy and only 6 fall below the minimum of 3,000, while of the 22 families in the remaining groups (excluding two abnormal cases), only one has a dietary yielding over 3,500 calories, while no less than 16 fall below the minimum. (*Ibid.*, pp. 12-23.) Here, of course, again we have the question of wrong feeding. In many cases the income could have been laid out to better advantage. "Where one family gets nearly their minimum adequate diet on an expenditure of 5.1 pence per man per diem . . . others on an expenditure of nearly 9d. fail to secure it." (*Ibid.*, p. 29.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

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Dr. Larkins, late assistant School Medical Officer for Surrey, also came to the conclusion "that a steady wage of 20s. a week is required to produce and properly maintain average strong well-nourished children; that below this figure, the danger zone is reached." This conclusion was based on an enquiry he made into the wages of the parents of all children aged 13 that he examined during a considerable period.<sup>1</sup> The results are seen in the following table:—

Average Weekly Wages. <sup>(2)</sup>	Average Weight in lbs. of children aged between 13 and 14.	General Condition of the children.			Average number of children in family.		
		Very Good. %	Average. %	Poor. %	Total.	Under 14.	Over 14.
Over 25s.	.. 99·6	50	46	4	5·5	3·4	2·1
20s. to 25s.	.. 84·1	15	73	11	5·7	2·8	2·9
18s. to 20s.	.. 77·0	—	56	44	6·3	3·8	2·5
16s. to 18s.	.. 72·6	—	42·5	57·5	6·6	4·2	2·4
14s. to 16s.	.. 74·3	—	22	78	7·6	2·9	4·7
12s. to 14s.	.. 70·8	—	20	80	3·6	2·2	1·4

The effect of education is, as was recognised thirty years ago, to intensify the evil of malnutrition. "To educate underfed children," says Dr. Leslie Mackenzie, "is to promote deterioration of physique by exhausting the nervous system. Education of the underfed is a positive evil."<sup>3</sup> "Defective nutrition," says the School Medical Officer for Blackburn, "to a far greater extent than any other single cause, and probably more than all other causes combined, renders children incapable of education. In a growing child the demands of muscle and bone must be satisfied before those of nervous tissue, and con-

<sup>1</sup> The actual number of children examined is not stated.

<sup>2</sup> The wages are the total weekly income out of which everything has to be paid, including rent, which varies from 4s. to 7s. 6d. ("The Influence of Wages on the Child's Nutrition," by F. E. Larkins, M.D. Edin., D.P.H., late Assistant School Medical Officer for Surrey, in *The Medical Officer*, December 17, 1910, p. 347.)

<sup>3</sup> *The Medical Inspection of School Children*, by Dr. W. Leslie Mackenzie, assisted by Dr. E. Matthew, 1904, p. 196.

sequently when there is deficiency, or what comes to the same thing, unsuitability of food or inability to assimilate it, the nervous system is the first to suffer, the brain is starved and anæmic, and the extra strain involved in school work can have only a harmful, and in some cases a disastrous result."<sup>1</sup> "There is probably no disease of children," says another School Medical Officer, "which needs combating more than bad nutrition. . . . It is quite impossible for any child thus affected to compete mentally with normal children of similar age ; in fact, mental defect is frequently found in association with malnutrition."<sup>2</sup>

This relation of mental capacity to nutrition was exemplified in the figures quoted by Dr. Ralph Crowley at the Education Conference in 1907. He examined 1,840 children in elementary schools at Bradford, and classified them according to their nutrition and intelligence. The results are shown in the following table :—

Nutrition.	Mental Capacity.	Numbers.	Percentage.
Good and sufficiently good.	{ Exceptional intelligence ..	37	4·4
	{ Above average ..	167	19·8
	{ Average ..	497	58·9
	{ Below average ..	110	13·1
	{ Dull .. .. .	32	3·8
Below normal.	{ Exceptional intelligence ..	21	3·1
	{ Above average ..	88	13·2
	{ Average ..	381	57·2
	{ Below average ..	125	18·9
	{ Dull .. .. .	50	7·6
Poor and very poor.	{ Exceptional intelligence ..	1	·3
	{ Above average ..	39	11·7
	{ Average ..	175	52·1
	{ Below average ..	71	21·4
	{ Dull .. .. .	46	14·5

<sup>1</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Blackburn for 1911, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Leeds for 1912, p. 30.

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Of the children of exceptional intelligence, 62·7 per cent. were of good nutrition, 35·6 per cent. were below normal, and 1·7 per cent. were of poor or very poor nutrition. Of the children who were exceptionally dull, only 24·9 per cent. were of good nutrition, 39·5 were below normal, and no less than 35·6 poor or very poor.<sup>1</sup>

In an enquiry made at Manchester by the School Medical Officer a few years ago, it was found on examining 146 poorly nourished and 163 markedly badly nourished children, that 56·1 per cent. of the former were below par in mental capacity, and 4·8 per cent. were classed as bad ; of the latter 63·2 per cent. were below normal, and 12·9 per cent. bad.

But the most remarkable results are recorded by Dr. Arkle, of Liverpool, in the enquiry to which we have already referred. He asked the teachers to give evidence as to the intelligence of the 2,111 elementary school children whom he examined. "The teachers in 'A' and 'B' both return about 60 per cent. of the children as normal in intelligence, but whereas the former returns 25 per cent. as above and 15 per cent. below normal, the latter only returns 5 per cent. above and 35 per cent. as below the normal. But it is in the return from the poorest school that we get the most curious result. In 'C' the master only feels justified in calling 22 per cent. of the boys normal, while he puts 33 per cent. above and 45 per cent. below normal." These figures, "it seems to me," writes Dr. Arkle, "can only be explained on one hypothesis. I believe, and my personal notes tend to confirm this view, that almost all the abnormal

<sup>1</sup> "The Physical Conditions of School Children," by Dr. Ralph H. Crowley, North of England Education Conference, January, 1907 (reprinted in the *School Government Chronicle*, Supplement, January 12, 1907, pp. 80-81);



intelligences in the poorest school are due to the one factor—starvation. . . . Over and over again I noted such cases of children without an ounce of superfluous flesh upon them, with skins harsh and rough, a rapid pulse and nerves ever on the strain, and yet with the expression of the most lively intelligence. But it is the eager intelligence of the hunting animal. . . . I fear it is from this class that the ranks of pilferers and sneak thieves come, and their cleverness is not of any real intellectual value. On the other hand, with children of a more lymphatic temperament, starvation seems to produce creatures more like automata. . . . If I told one of these children to open its mouth, it would take no notice till the request became a command, which had to be accompanied by a slight shake to draw the child's attention. Then the mouth would be slowly opened widely, but no effort would be made to close it again until the child was told to do so. . . . I believe both these types of children are suffering from what I would call starvation of the nervous system, in one case causing irritation and in the other torpor. And, further, these cases are always associated with the clearest signs of bodily starvation, stunted growth, emaciation, rough and cold skin and the mouth full of viscid saliva due to hunger."<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat similar results were observed by Dr. Badger, the School Medical Officer for Wolverhampton. In comparing 1,299 normal children of thirteen years of age with 100 mal-nourished children, he found that, while of the normal scholars 16.6 per cent. were of good intelligence, 68 per cent. of average intelligence and 15.5 per cent. dull, among the mal-nourished children the percentages

<sup>1</sup> "The Medical Examination of School Children," by Dr. A. S. Arkle, in *School Government Chronicle*, Supplement, January 12, 1907, p. 78.

were respectively 16, 59 and 25.<sup>1</sup> This "record in respect of intelligence," points out Sir George Newman, "shows, what has been noted by other observers, that though the proportion of children considered as 'dull' by the teachers is considerably larger among mal-nourished children than among children generally, nevertheless there are children who suffer serious defects in nutrition whose mental powers are well above the average. It is naturally quick and keen children such as these who require care in order that their physical health may not be further injured by excessive mental application."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of the School Medical Officer for Wolverhampton for 1911, p. 24. (Quoted in Report of Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 24.)

<sup>2</sup> Report of Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 24.

## CHAPTER V

### THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL MEALS ON THE CHILDREN

SINCE the causes of malnutrition are so many and diverse it is obvious that this defect cannot be remedied or prevented solely by the provision of school meals. But that the provision of wholesome food at regular hours has a marked effect in the improvement of the physique of the children, there is abundant evidence.

Unfortunately, though the periodic weighing of children who are receiving school meals, in order to ascertain the effect produced, has been strongly advocated by the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education,<sup>1</sup> this advice has rarely been acted upon. It is true that a few—a very few—Education Authorities profess to have a system of weighing children who are receiving meals, before they are put on, and after they are taken off, the feeding-list, but for the most part this weighing is only done spasmodically, and the records are not accessible.

Several such enquiries have, however, been made in the past, the best known being that made by Dr. Ralph Crowley at Bradford in 1907.<sup>2</sup> The results of this experiment have been often quoted, but they are so important that they will bear repetition. Forty children were selected from two of the poorest schools in the city, the children being mainly those who appeared to be

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1911, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford Education Committee, Report on a Course of Meals given to necessitous children from April to July, 1907.

most in need of food, though a few were included primarily on the ground of their particularly poor home circumstances.<sup>1</sup> To these children from April 17 to July 24 two meals a day were given—breakfast, consisting of oatmeal porridge with milk and treacle followed by bread and margarine or dripping, with hot or cold milk to drink ; and a dinner comprising in rotation one of seventeen different menus specially drawn up so as to contain the amounts of fat and proteid necessary for a child's nourishment.<sup>2</sup> Every effort was made to render the meals of as much educational value as possible, and special attention was given to such matters as the provision of table-cloths and flowers and the inculcation of good manners.

The children experimented on were weighed three times during the five weeks preceding the starting of the meals, and every week while they were receiving them. For the purpose of making comparative observations 69 children were selected who were being fed at home, and who in other respects were as comparable as possible with those who were receiving the breakfasts and dinners. These "control children" were also weighed weekly. During the four weeks, March 12 to April 9, before the feeding began, the forty children gained on an average .17 kilos, and during the week previous to feeding .008 kilos. At the end of the first week of feeding the average increase was found to be .58 kilos (1 lb. 4 oz.).<sup>3</sup> During the next week, there was a slight loss of .001 kilos, followed by a gain during the next two weeks of .15 and .13 kilos respectively. During the ensuing eleven days, the Whitsuntide holiday, no meals were given. At the end of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> "The average gain per year of children of this class and size," Dr. Crowley points out, "is not more than two kilos (4 lbs. 6 oz.) for the whole year." (*Ibid.*, p. 9.)

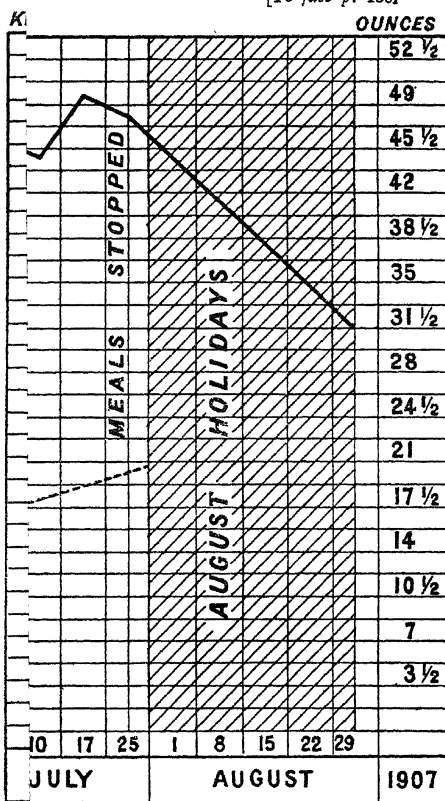
this period it was found that the "control children" who, during the three weeks preceding the holiday, had lost .003 kilos on the average, had during these eleven days gained an average of .23 kilos; in the case, however, of the children fed at school, not only had the lack of food neutralised the benefits of fresh air and exercise, but they had actually lost an average of .48 kilos, a loss which it took them nearly a fortnight to make up, after the meals had been started again. During the eleven days after the holiday the "control children" only gained .02 kilos. A group of "control children" from another school similarly gained .21 kilos during the holiday, and only .04 kilos during the subsequent fortnight. The same result was observed during the five weeks' summer holiday; the "control children" gained on an average .37 kilos (*i.e.*, at the rate of .074 kilos per week), while the children fed at school lost .46 kilos.<sup>1</sup> The accompanying chart illustrates the rate of increase of the two groups of children. Apart from the increase in weight, the improvement in the general appearance and carriage of the children who received the meals "was more or less apparent in all, and very obvious in some of the children, who visibly filled out and brightened up."<sup>2</sup> The reverse process was equally apparent after the summer holidays.

At Northampton, in 1909, a similar experiment was conducted under the supervision of the Medical Officer of Health. Forty-four children were given breakfast and dinner for fourteen weeks, and weighed weekly, together

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11. As Dr. Crowley points out, several points have to be considered in interpreting the effect on weight. "The increase in the weight of children normally varies greatly at different seasons of the year," and "at any given season fluctuates much, sometimes, comparatively, even from week to week. The proportional increase in weight varies with the age of the child, or rather with the weight to which the child has already attained." (*Ibid.*, p. 8.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[To face p. 186.



CH<sub>1</sub> OF THE CHILDREN WHO WERE FED AT BRADFORD.  
TIME—OF THE "CONTROL CHILDREN."



with forty children of the same social class who were not receiving meals. At the beginning of the experiment the average weight of the fed children was 1·71 kilos less than that of the "controls"; in the second week their average gain was much greater, and by the end of the fourteenth week the difference in weight was reduced to 1·02 kilos. During the Easter holidays of ten days in which no meals were given, the children who had previously been fed lost in weight while the "controls" gained.<sup>1</sup>

Another interesting experiment was conducted by Dr. Haden Guest in a poor school in Lambeth in the early part of 1908.<sup>2</sup> A large number of children were selected—244—but the attendance of many of these was irregular and continuous records were obtained in the case of only 89 children. From January 24 to April 11 a midday meal was given six days a week. The meal consisted of two courses, a normal portion of which was calculated to be sufficient to supply the amounts of proteids, carbohydrates, fats and salts, physiologically necessary for children. The same meal was never given twice in succession, a variation of six menus being repeated over twelve consecutive days. The room in which the meals were served was bright and airy, the surroundings having, in Dr. Guest's estimation, an important physiological bearing on good digestion. All the children in the school were weighed before and after the experiment and again in the first week of July, the children who were receiving dinners being also weighed regularly during the experiment. Taking first the case of the elder children, we read that the results "showed a very decided and positive improvement both from the general standpoint and from that

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act up to March 31, 1909, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> MS. Report on Lambeth School Children Feeding Experiment, by Dr. L. Haden Guest, 1908.



of increase in weight, the fed children increasing at a more rapid rate than the other children in the school with whom they were compared.”<sup>1</sup> “Starting a good deal below the normal of their own school mates, they tended, under the influence of one good meal a day, rapidly to approach that normal.” And again, “the increase in the healthy appearance of the children and in their general alertness was marked. Children with sores, small abscesses, colds and blepharitis recovered from these ailments. . . . The amount of absence from school due to illness was considerably less during the course of the experiment.” This testimony was fully borne out by the headmaster. “The effect of the feeding of the children,” he declared, “is a marked improvement judging from the general appearance of the boys, who are almost all brighter. The improvement is particularly noticeable in their play. They are more vigorous and enter more heartily into the rougher games of boys and bear the knocks without coming to the teacher to complain. They certainly enjoy their play more and show less fatigue. There are few lads shivering against the walls with hands in pockets, sloping shoulders and pale faces. In school, the effect during the first few weeks was drowsiness. This was succeeded by improved tone and greater independence of character, and generally a greater individuality. The difference in mental condition is not so marked, and is certainly more difficult to measure. There is less fatigue in lessons, and the lads are capable of more continuous exertion.” The teachers’ reports on the girls were of the same character, though not so decided in tone, except on one point—that those who were fed were “more troublesome,” that is to say, more full of spirits,

<sup>1</sup> We have, unfortunately, not been able to obtain a copy of the figures on which Dr. Haden Guest’s report is based.

a factor which appeared also in their play. Turning to the effect of the meals on the infants a most disquieting state of affairs was disclosed. It was found that, while the weight of the infants who were fed was less than that of the other infants of their own school, "the difference was much less than in the case of the bigger children, the increase in weight in each case correspondingly slow, and the amount by which both groups fell below the normal greater." During the first week there was a remarkable fall in weight among the infants who received meals, ascribable partly to the fact that they did not receive the necessary attention which was afterwards given them, partly to the fact that they were unfamiliar with good nourishing food (a factor operating in the case of the elder children also, though to a far less degree<sup>1</sup>); largely, however, it was due to their being "actually unable to digest and assimilate this food." This slow progress on the part of the infants Dr. Guest attributed to improper feeding at home. In most Lambeth homes the younger children received the same diet (the staple articles being tea and bread and butter) as the older ones, but whereas the latter could manage on this diet, and, with a good midday meal in addition, even flourish, the former could not thrive. Dr. Guest therefore advocated that necessitous infants should be fed at least twice a day, on a diet different from that given to the elder children, and that more individual care should be devoted to each child, since in most cases they required coaxing before they would eat the wholesome food provided.

On the cessation of the meals we find the same result ensuing as we have already noticed at Bradford and Northampton. For when, in July, 1908, three months

<sup>1</sup> In the case of the boys, their weights, during this week, only increased a little; those of the girls remained stationary.

after the meals had been discontinued, all the children were again weighed and measured, it was found that there was a general decline in weight; the decline was so general that it was obviously due partly to a diminution in clothing, but "the necessitous children, who after the conclusion of the experiment were only fed spasmodically, show a greater decrease than the other children, pointing to either a stationary weight during the twelve weeks from April to July or a loss of weight."

Interesting figures as to the effects of different dietaries were obtained at Sheffield in 1910. Before this date the meals provided for necessitous children had taken the form of cocoa breakfasts. As an experiment at one school some of the boys were given porridge for several weeks. Their weights were compared with those of a group of other boys who were receiving cocoa breakfasts at school, and also with a group of boys who were being fed at home. The two groups of boys who were fed at school were drawn from equally poor districts, those who were fed at home being somewhat better off. It was found that the boys who were receiving cocoa breakfasts only gained on an average  $\cdot 0451$  kilos or 1.58 oz. per week; the boys who were being fed at home gained  $\cdot 0594$  kilos (2.09 oz.); while the boys who were receiving porridge breakfasts gained as much as  $\cdot 0942$  kilos (3.317 oz.). As a result of this proof of the superiority of porridge diet, porridge breakfasts were substituted for cocoa breakfasts in all the schools.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of Chief School Medical Officer for Sheffield for 1910, pp. 26-27. We may quote here striking results observed in the improved physique of the children at a special school for cripple children in London consequent on an improved dietary. A two-course dinner of meat, potatoes and pudding had been previously given, but in the summer of 1901 it was decided to provide a more liberal and varied dietary, *e.g.*, more hot meat, eggs, milk, cream, vegetables and fruit. The results were soon apparent. "Partially paralysed children," writes Mrs. Humphry Ward

At Brighton it has for the last few years been the practice to weigh before and after the course of meals the children who have been recommended for feeding on medical grounds. At the end of the last session, 1912-13, 269 children who had received meals for nine weeks or more were thus re-examined. It was found that 133 of these, or 50 per cent., no longer needed meals on medical grounds, that is, they had been brought over the average weight for a given height.<sup>1</sup>

Where only milk or codliver oil is given a remarkable improvement is often effected. Indeed, several teachers told us that in their opinion the provision of milk was more beneficial than either breakfasts or dinners. At a Bethnal Green school, during the winter of 1909-10, it was found that out of 57 boys and 109 girls examined at the medical inspection, 24 of the boys and 61 of the girls were underfed. These children were given a teaspoonful of codliver oil in a cupful of warm milk every day during the morning interval. At the end of the year the nutrition was re-assessed, with the following results :—<sup>2</sup>

a few months after the change, "have been recovering strength in hands and limbs with greater rapidity than before. A child who, last year, often could not walk at all from rickets and extreme delicacy and seemed to be fading away, and who in May was still languid and feeble, is now racing about in the garden on his crutches; a boy who last year could only crawl on his hands and feet is now rapidly and steadily learning to walk, and so on. . . . Hardly any child now wants to lie down during school time, whereas applications to lie down used to be common, and the children both learn and remember better." (Letter from Mrs. Humphry Ward, *The Times*, September 26, 1901.)

<sup>1</sup> Brighton Education Committee, Report on the re-examination of children receiving free meals during the winter session, 1912-13.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report of London County Council for 1910, Vol. III., p. 130.

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				Nutrition:		
				Good.	Average.	Bad.
57 boys	{ Before	..	..	4	19	34
	{ After	..	..	26	28	3
109 girls	{ Before	..	..	3	49	57
	{ After	..	..	42	61	6

The results of these experiments are sufficient in themselves to establish conclusively the benefit to be derived from regular feeding even when no other factor in the child's environment is changed. "No doubt," says Dr. Haden Guest, "irregular and late hours, disturbed sleep, overcrowding, improper clothing and employment of children after and before school hours, do each and all exercise a very detrimental effect on the children of poor parents. But that the greatest influence for evil is exerted by improper and insufficient food is a matter over which it appears impossible to have great controversy."<sup>1</sup>

And these results are corroborated by abundant testimony from School Medical Officers, teachers, Care Committee workers and others, of the benefit derived by the children where the Provision of Meals Act has been put in force. "The children derived an enormous amount of benefit" from the meals.<sup>2</sup> "The physical appearance of the children speaks in pronounced terms" of the value of feeding.<sup>3</sup> "Those who have any practical experience . . . are all agreed that such meals [free breakfasts] are of the greatest value, not only from a humanitarian point of view but also as a necessary adjunct for successful education."<sup>4</sup> "There is continuous evidence of the

<sup>1</sup> MS. Report by Dr. L. Haden Guest on Lambeth School Children Feeding Experiment, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Macclesfield for 1911, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* for Workington for 1911, p. viii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* for Hastings for 1911, p. 14.

immense benefit conferred upon the children by the administration of this Act—both from the inspection of the scholars at the dining-centres and from the reports of the teachers.”<sup>1</sup> These are a few typical opinions culled from reports of School Medical Officers. At Manchester “the operation of the provision of free meals acts very largely . . . not so much in the way of improving the physical condition of children already emaciated and debilitated, but of preventing their ever reaching that condition by stepping in when the home income fails. It is certain that since the organisation of the supply of free meals at centres covering practically all parts of the city where they are required, *the number of underfed children—i.e., the number showing signs of underfeeding—has decreased markedly.* It is also certain that the type of child at the feeding centres is gradually improving—*i.e., there are fewer children found in the centres with signs of the result of bad nourishment, and there are fewer such children in the schools.*”<sup>2</sup> At Bradford, where the Local Education Authority has systematically endeavoured to effect an improvement in the condition of the children both by the school medical service and the provision of meals, there has been in the last few years a very marked improvement in nutrition and “a fairly regular increase in weight amongst Bradford children as a whole. They are approaching nearer each year to the national average.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Newcastle-on-Tyne for 1910, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Manchester for 1911, pp. 256–7. In the following year he reports that out of over four hundred children attending eight feeding centres, only ten cases of markedly bad nourishment were recorded. (*Ibid.* for 1912, p. 31.)

<sup>3</sup> *The Health and Physique of School Children*, by Arthur Greenwood, 1913, pp. 65, 66. “It may perhaps be urged,” he continues, “that this progress is purely accidental; but a close

The witness of the teachers is no less favourable. In London, for instance, the Education Committee in 1910 made enquiries among the head teachers of some of the schools where a considerable number of meals were provided; the majority of the teachers were enthusiastic as to the benefit derived. "Physical progress is most marked," said one headmistress. "The disappearance of chronic headaches, sores on faces, gatherings on fingers, pains in chest . . . point to a more 'fit' condition, which the children can only express for me by saying that they 'feel better now,' for they 'are not hungry all the afternoons now.'"<sup>1</sup> And a headmaster writes, "The change in the children after a month's provision of suitable and nourishing diet for breakfast and dinner has been distinctly beneficial. They have been more inclined to take part in the school sports, into which they have entered with considerable zest. Their appearance, too, has greatly improved. Their eyes have become brighter, their cheeks rounded. If, for any reason, such as temporary absence, they have lost the advantage of regular feeding, they have almost immediately shown signs of deterioration. When the period [of feeding] has been prolonged to three or six months, their health has permanently improved, and their capacity for work and play has still further developed."<sup>2</sup> "The children on the necessitous register," says another headmaster, "now fully participate in these activities [games and sports] and supply rather above their proportionate number of prominent

examination of a large number of school medical officers' reports does not show any general increase during the few years for which records are available. There are variations from year to year, of course, but no apparent regular improvement, except in isolated instances, of which Bradford is one." (*Ibid.*, p. 65.)

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of the London County Council for 1910, Chapter XLI., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

performers; this is equally true of swimming. It is indisputable that in the past lack of nourishment, where it did not entirely exclude, greatly limited the part taken by many children in this the most attractive side of school life."<sup>1</sup>

We have ourselves questioned numbers of teachers, both in London and the provinces, on this point. Here and there are found, it is true, teachers who declare that no improvement is to be observed, perhaps because, being with the children day by day they do not notice any change. But the verdict as to the beneficial results of school meals is almost unanimous. At Bradford we were told that it used to be not uncommon for a child to faint in school from want of food; such an occurrence is now unknown. Often children who are dull and listless are found, after a course of regular meals, to become full of life and spirits. It is indeed frequently remarked that the children become "naughtier" after the meals, a sign, of course, of increased vitality.

We find that, as a result of the regular feeding, the resisting power of the children is increased and they are less susceptible to the contraction of infectious and other diseases.<sup>2</sup> The attendance at school is thus improved. At a school in the Potteries, the headmaster informed us that during the coal strike in 1912, when three meals a day were given in the schools, there was far less non-attendance than usual through biliousness, headaches or other minor ailments.<sup>3</sup> At Liverpool we were told that there has been a considerable improvement in the regularity of the children's attendance, as a result

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Bootle for 1912, p. 56; *Ibid.* for Worcester for 1911, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> As we have seen, this result was noticed during the feeding experiment at Lambeth (see ante, p. 188.)



of the dinners.<sup>1</sup> Non-attendance may be due, of course, not only to illness, but also to lack of food. When the parents have nothing to give the children for breakfast they will encourage them to sleep through the morning. The headmaster of a very poor school in Liverpool told us that some years ago, before the Education Committee had undertaken the provision of meals, the attendance was very bad. He raised a voluntary fund and provided breakfasts himself. As a result the attendance improved to such an extent that the increased grant amounted to £74, which more than covered the cost of the food (£63).

It would be interesting to compare the nutrition of the children in the Day Industrial Schools, where three meals a day are given. Since the children in these schools, who, it must be remembered, are drawn very largely from the poorest and most neglected class, return home in the evening, the only condition altered is the supply of food. We have, unfortunately, not been able to obtain any statistics as to the weights of these children, but we have received ample evidence from teachers and others as to the very marked physical improvement which is to be observed after they have been in the schools but a very short time. At Liverpool some time ago it was found that the children attending the Day Industrial Schools suffered much from sores and gatherings. On the diet being altered very considerably, these ailments entirely disappeared, and the children, we were told, are now in perfect health. At Leeds the School Medical Officer found that, while of 11,763 children from the ordinary elementary schools, 5.6 per cent. were of

<sup>1</sup> At Bootle, on the other hand, where "it was anticipated that the movement would have a beneficial effect upon the regularity of the attendance . . . there is no evidence to show that such has been the case, and it is very doubtful whether the attendance has been appreciably affected." (Report of the Bootle School Canteen Committee for 1910-11, p. 8.)

sub-normal nutrition, the percentage in the same condition among the Day Industrial School children (of whom 91 were examined) was only 1.1.<sup>1</sup>

Let us turn now to the effect of the meals on the mental capabilities of the children. This effect is, from the nature of the case, less easy to assess, and the evidence is not so unanimous as on the question of the physical effect. A minority of teachers assert that no improvement is to be observed. At Hull, for instance, out of 165 head-teachers who were asked for their opinions on this point, 76 declared that there had been a considerable or distinct improvement, 53 that there had been a slight improvement, and 36 that there was no visible difference.<sup>2</sup> At Bradford, 134 teachers were of opinion that there had been a considerable or distinct improvement, 35 that the improvement had been slight, 35 that no visible difference was to be noticed.<sup>3</sup> "I cannot say," said the head-master of a London school, "that the improvement in mentality has been in any way commensurate with the physical improvement."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, a head-mistress declared, "there is undoubted improvement physically and educationally in the necessitous children

<sup>1</sup> Report of School Medical Officer for Leeds for 1910, p. 41. The chairman of the Leeds Education Committee, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, stated, "the supply of three good meals a day has been of great benefit to the children in attendance, who compare favourably with the children attending the ordinary public elementary schools. . . . They take a good position in school competitions for swimming, etc., and are particularly smart in school drills and exercises." (Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, Vol. IV. of Evidence, Appendix LXXXII. (12).)

<sup>2</sup> Hull Education Committee, Appendix to Minutes of the Provision of Meals Sub-Committee, October 20, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> Report of Bradford Education Committee for the 16 months ended July 31, 1912, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report of the London County Council for 1910, Chapter XLI., p. 9.

supplied with meals at this school. But I confess the fact only came home to me vividly at our last terminal examination, when I found three of them headed the class in Standard III. (including all subjects)."<sup>1</sup> Another wrote, "the girls receiving regular meals have become more alert, less apathetic, and consequently far more ready to respond to the teachers' efforts to gain their undivided attention. The interest thus aroused has led the girls to look upon all branches of their work with more favour than heretofore. The taste for knowledge once established, homework has followed with the inevitable results produced by voluntary effort rather than compulsory work."<sup>2</sup> In North Kensington the "children who are supplied with milk at school or who are given breakfast and dinner respond at once to the better feeding, and show distinct improvement in their class work."<sup>3</sup> At Darlington it was reported that, "generally speaking, the replies [from the teachers] were very definite to the effect that the provision of dinners had assisted the educational progress of the children."<sup>4</sup> And a striking illustration of the benefit derived from a regular course of feeding is given us by a medical member of an Education Committee who writes, "I find the condition of the children much improved by feeding. Some children who, eighteen months ago, were considered half-witted are now monitors and monitresses, taking an intelligent interest in their work."

We have already noticed the improvement in attendance consequent on the provision of meals. This, of course, assists in the educational progress, not only of those children who before attended irregularly, but of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report of the London County Council for 1910, Vol. III., p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> Report of Darlington Education Committee, 1908-10, p. xii.

the whole class, since the others are no longer kept back by the irregular attenders.

Too much importance cannot be attached to the training of the children in habits of self-control and thoughtfulness for one another. For this training the common meal furnishes an excellent opportunity. As we have seen, far too little attention is paid to this aspect of the question. It is true that, even where the meal is served in a somewhat rough-and-ready fashion, leaving, in the eyes of the educationalist, much to be desired, we have generally been informed that there has been an improvement in manners. At first the children, many of whom, probably, had rarely sat down to a meal before, would throw the food at each other or on the floor, and the scene was often a pandemonium. Some sort of order has been evolved out of this chaos. But how far this falls short of what might be effected is seen when one compares the great majority of feeding-centres all over England, not necessarily the worst, with a small minority, such as some of the Bradford centres, or one or two London centres, where the meal is truly educational. It is interesting to hear that, when recently a party of children were sent to the Cinderella Holiday Home from one of the Bradford schools and the supervisor was particularly requested to notice those who had been receiving meals, it was found that they alone knew how to behave at table, and that the others learnt from them.

In another direction the school meal may have an educational result of the highest importance. Children in all ranks of life are notoriously conservative in the matter of food and shy of venturing on unknown dishes, but with the poorest class of children it is not only "faddiness" which has to be contended with; the unaccustomed food, however wholesome for the normal child, actually does not agree with these chronically underfed

children. As was pointed out at the time of the passing of the Provision of Meals Act, "one great merit of this Act . . . will be the teaching and training of a child in the matter of taste. At present it is a well known physiological fact that the slum stomach cannot accommodate itself in a moment to good, wholesome food. The child has been accustomed to tea and jam and pickles, and to food that is often more tasty than nourishing. It will now eat under public and *medical superintendence* and gradually a pure and simple taste will be cultivated."<sup>1</sup> That this prophecy is in process of being fulfilled may, we think, with justice be claimed. There still exists a certain amount of difficulty in inducing the children to take food to which they are unaccustomed, but that this difficulty can be surmounted by the exercise of tact and attention to individual needs has been practically demonstrated again and again. Over and over again we have been told the same tale, "at first the children would not eat this or that dish, but now they have learned to like it." Especially is this the case with porridge. At first, wherever this was given, it was found that many refused to eat it, but this antipathy was gradually overcome, and the children finally ate it with relish.<sup>2</sup> It is amusing to find that at St. George's-in-the-East, where a porridge breakfast was devised as a test of need, it being thought that no child would come who was not really hungry, the children now like the porridge so much that this diet no

<sup>1</sup> *Child Life and Labour*, by Margaret Alden, M.D., 1908, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, to quote one of many instances, at Bradford, when porridge breakfasts were given in the experiment of 1907, it was found that the first morning thirteen refused to eat it; the next morning only two refused, and after that all ate and enjoyed it. (Bradford Education Committee, Report on a Course of Meals given to Necessitous Children from April to July, 1907, p. 4.)

longer furnishes a test. Where the children do not learn to eat what is provided, it always turns out, on further enquiry, that the supervisors have failed, either because of the large numbers whom they have to look after or, perhaps, through lack of enthusiasm, to devote that careful and detailed attention to the children without which it is quite impossible to bring about any change.

Moreover, it is encouraging to notice that this education of the children in the matter of taste is not without its effect on the home diet. This was observed as long ago as 1895. In giving evidence before the Committee of the London School Board, Mrs. Burgwin declared that, as a result of the porridge breakfasts given to the school children, there was "an increasing demand upon the local shopkeepers by the poor families themselves."<sup>1</sup> "At first," said Miss Honnor Morten, "the children did not care for porridge, but the result of the breakfasts has been that many now persuade their parents to make it for them."<sup>2</sup> "The children," says Lady Meyer, who has started penny dinners in connection with the Health Centre at Newport, "act as missionaries to their mothers, comparing the meals at the Health Centre with those at their homes, much to the disparagement of the latter, which quickly brought the more intelligent mothers to the centre to 'see how it was done.'"<sup>3</sup>

As far as the children are concerned, indeed, whether we consider the improvement in physique, mental capacity or manners, there is no doubt that the provision of school meals has proved of the greatest benefit.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Special Committee of the London School Board on Underfed Children, 1895, Appendix I., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the General Purposes Committee of the London School Board on Underfed Children, 1899, Appendix I., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *A Health Centre and Dental Clinic in a Rural District, Newport, Essex*, 1911, p. 6.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EFFECT ON THE PARENTS

THE evidence which has been presented in the preceding chapter as to the benefits resulting from the feeding of school children would have evoked, fifty, or even twenty years ago, a simple and decisive retort. Granted, it would have been argued, that the health and educational capacity of the children is deteriorated by lack of nourishment, that irreparable and preventible damage is inflicted, and that the provision of meals by a public authority averts this evil for many and mitigates it for all ; yet no plea of immediate expediency can stand against the ultimate loss involved in any public assumption of the cost of providing maintenance for children. If a local authority supplies part, even a small part, of their food, parental responsibility is, *pro tanto*, diminished, with results disastrous not only to the character of the parents but to the prospects of the children themselves. For if parents receive assistance in one direction from a public authority, they will soon clamour to receive assistance in other directions as well. In order to qualify for it, they will neglect their children, who will thus benefit in one way only to be victimized in others. The children themselves, having been fed from public funds, will be trained in habits of dependence, and, when they grow up, will insist on still further provision being made for their children in their turn. Thus one tiny breach in the walls of the family will insensibly be widened till it admits a flood in which domestic affections and

the integrity of the home, "relations dear, and all the charities of father, son, and brother" are submerged.

If such anticipations seem exaggerated, they have nevertheless played an important part in determining the policy pursued in England towards more than one question, and lie behind many of the criticisms which are passed on certain recent forms of social intervention. The idea that relief given to the child must be regarded as relief given to the parent, and that, if given at all, it must be accompanied by severe restrictions, was enunciated emphatically in the Poor Law Report of 1834—indeed that famous document scarcely mentions children except in so far as the treatment of adults is influenced by these appendages—and has since become a settled part of Poor Law policy. The fear that parental responsibility might be weakened was a criticism brought against the Education Act of 1870, against the abolition of school fees in 1894, and against the provision of medical treatment for school children under the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act of 1907. Naturally, therefore, the public provision of meals for school children has not escaped the criticism that it would weaken the bond between parent and child and ultimately result in "the breaking up of the home." "To remove the spur to exertion and self-restraint," reported a special committee of the Charity Organisation Society in 1887, "which the spectacle of his children's hunger must be to any man in whom the feelings of natural kindness are not altogether dead, is to assume a very grave responsibility, and perhaps to take away the last chance of re-establishing the character and fortunes of the breadwinner, and, with him, the fortunes of the whole household. It is true, no doubt, that there are parents who are past redemption by influences of this kind, but the majority of the committee are of opinion that it is better in the interests of the community to allow,



in such cases, the sins of the parents to be visited on the children than to impair the principle of the solidarity of the family and run the risk of permanently demoralising large numbers of the population by the offer of free meals to their children.”<sup>1</sup>

Now it is obvious that an economic policy which was determined primarily by a consideration for the “solidarity of the family” would lead to far-reaching measures of industrial reorganisation. If the ideal is a society in which “the bread-winner” is by his “exertion and self-restraint” to guarantee “the fortunes of his whole household,” the immediate object of attack must be those industrial evils which effectually prevent him from doing so at present, and of which the principal are low wages, casual labour, recurrent periods of unemployment and bad housing. That a crusade conducted in the interests of the family against these regular features of modern industry is entirely desirable need not be questioned. But in its absence it is obvious that, so far from allowing “the sins of the parents to be visited on the children,” what we are really doing is to allow the sins of the employer to be visited on the employed or the sins of the community to be visited upon future generations of unborn children, and it seems almost frivolous to ascribe the results of this constant and vicarious sacrifice to the measures which, like the provision of school meals, are directed merely to the partial mitigation of some of its worst effects. The truth is, to put the matter bluntly,

<sup>1</sup> “Charity and Food,” report of a Special Committee of the Charity Organisation Society, 1887, p. 16. For later expressions of the same line of criticism, see, for instance, “The Relief of School Children,” by M. Clutton and E. Neville (C.O.S. Occasional Paper), March, 1901, pp. 4, 6; “Underfed School Children,” by Arthur Clay (C.O.S. Occasional Paper), May, 1905, p. 3.; “The Feeding of School Children,” by Miss McKnight, in *Charity Organisation Review*, July, 1906, p. 37; “A New Poor Law for Children,” by Rev. H. Iselin, in *Charity Organisation Review*, March, 1909, p. 170.

that what breaks up the family is not the presence of food but its absence, and that, if the public conscience is unperturbed by the spectacle of numerous homes in which economic circumstances have deprived the parents of the means of providing meals for their children themselves, its sudden sensitiveness at the thought of meals being provided by some external authority would be ludicrous if it did not lead to such tragic consequences. The reader who reflects on the thousands of dock-labourers in London, Liverpool and Glasgow who, through no fault of their own, can obtain only three days' work a week, or on the 25 to 30 per cent. of the working-class population of Reading who have been shown by Professor Bowley to be receiving a total family income below the low standard fixed by Mr. Rowntree,<sup>1</sup> and to be receiving it, in 49 per cent. of the cases, because they are "in regular work but at low wages,"<sup>2</sup> will scarcely argue that the mere provision of meals, however injudicious he may regard it, is likely to contribute seriously to the weakening of family relationships which have been already strained or broken by industrial anarchy or industrial tyranny. *Sublata causa tollitur effectus*. But does any one seriously believe that a cessation of school meals would restore

<sup>1</sup> "Working-Class Households in Reading," by Professor A. L. Bowley, in *The Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, June, 1913, p. 686. The minimum standard for food was computed by Mr. Rowntree, in 1901, as 3s. for an adult, and 2s. 3d. for a child. This standard has been raised by Professor Bowley to 3s. 6d. and 2s. 7d. respectively, since prices in Reading in 1912 were about sixteen per cent. higher than at York in 1901. The diet on which Mr. Rowntree based his computations was mainly vegetarian, and his minimum standard assumed a knowledge of food values and perfectly scientific expenditure. (*Ibid.*, p. 684.) Taking a slightly different standard, Professor Bowley computes that "*more than half the working-class children of Reading, during some part of their first fourteen years, live in households where the standard of life in question is not attained.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 692.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 693.

the desired "solidarity of the family" to the casual or sweated labourer?

If the suggestion that the provision of meals is a *principal* cause undermining parental responsibility is fantastic, is the suggestion that it must necessarily exercise *some* influence in that direction better founded? We shall deal later with such facts as can be used to throw light on this question. But we may point out here that the idea underlying it usually derives part of its cogency in the minds of many of its supporters less from any concrete evidence than from an implicit assumption that there is a "natural" division of duties between public authorities and the individual citizen, and that any redistribution of them between these two parties, which removes one function from the latter to the former, must necessarily result in the undermining of character, the weakening of the incentive to self-maintenance, the decay of parental responsibility, in short, in all the phenomena of the process known as "pauperisation." Now we need scarcely point out that, stated in this crude form, the theory that every assumption of fresh responsibilities by public authorities results in the undermining of character has no foundation in the experience of mankind. It is, of course, quite true that any sudden removal from an individual of duties which he has hitherto been accustomed to discharge may result in weakening the springs of effort. It is also quite true that any sudden addition to his responsibilities may result in crushing them, and that, as far as the more poorly paid ranks of labour are concerned, energies are far more often worn out in a hopeless struggle than sapped by an insidious ease. But by themselves these facts prove nothing as to the *manner* in which burdens, duties, responsibilities, should be distributed between the community and its individual members. What experience shows is that there is no

“natural” allocation of functions, but that there has been throughout history at once a constant addition to, and a constant re-arrangement of them, and that the former process is quite compatible with the latter. Nor is there any ground for the idea that the extension of the activities of public bodies must necessarily result in accelerating the approach of the state of economic and moral inertia described by those who anticipate it as “Pauperism.” If that were the case, all civilised communities would, indeed, have been hastening to destruction from a time “whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.” For our fathers had no elementary education, our grandfathers no municipal water, and few lamp-posts; while our great-grandfathers enjoyed the independence derived from the possession of relatively few roads, and those of a character sufficiently bad to offer the most powerful incentives to the energy and self-reliance of the pedestrian. On this theory the citizen of Manchester would be more pauperised than the citizen of London; both would be seriously pauperised compared with the peasant of Connemara; while the wretched inhabitants of German municipalities would be wallowing in a perfect quagmire of perpetual pauperism. Why indeed should one stop here? There have been periods in history in which not only these functions, but the organisation of justice and the equipment of military forces have been left to the bracing activities of private individuals; and an enquiry into the decline and fall of individual independence would, if logically pursued, lead us into dim regions of history far anterior to the Norman Conquest. The origins of modern pauperism, like the origins of modern liberty, are to be sought among “the primeval forests of Germany!”

While, however, there is no foundation for the doctrine that every extension of public provision results in a

slackening of energy on the part of the individual, it is, none the less, possible that this may be the result of the particular kind of provision which consists in the supplying of meals to school children. In the event of that being proved to be the case, it is by no means easy to say what policy should be pursued. Public authorities, it may be argued, should cease to provide school meals. To this answer, which is at first sight plausible, there are two objections which are together almost insuperable. The first is that Education Authorities are under a legal obligation to provide education for the children in their charge and to carry out medical inspection with a view to discovering their ailments; while they may, if they think fit, provide medical treatment for them. They owe it to their constituents to spend their money in the most effective and economical manner. Education given to children who are suffering from want of nourishment not only is ineffective, but may be positively deleterious. When the extent of malnutrition is known, is it reasonable to expect the Authorities deliberately to shut their eyes to the fact that so far from benefiting the children who suffer from it they may be positively aggravating their misfortunes? If it be replied, *ruat coelum fiat justitia*, let the children suffer in order to improve the moral character of their parents, an Education Committee may not unfairly retort that it is elected primarily to attend to the welfare of the children, and that the wisdom of elevating parents, who *ex hypothesi* are demoralised, at the cost of the rising generation is, at any rate, too problematical to justify it in neglecting its own special duties. Moreover, even assuming that public bodies were willing to apply to the education of children the principles recommended in 1834 for the treatment of "improvidence and vice," there is no reason to suppose that they would succeed in averting the "pauperisation" which is dreaded. No fact is

more clearly established by the history of all kinds of relief administration since 1834 than that the effect of refusing to make public provision for persons in distress is merely to lead to the provision of assistance in a rather more haphazard, uncoordinated and indiscriminate manner by private agencies. A purely negative policy is systematically "blacklegged" by private philanthropists. Rightly or wrongly the plain man finds his stomach turned by the full gospel of deterrence; with the result that, while the English Poor Law is nominally deterrent, enormous sums are spent every year in private charity in London alone; that in 1886 the Local Government Board recommended local authorities to provide relief for certain classes of workers apart from the Poor Law, on the ground that the Poor Law, for whose administration the Local Government Board is responsible, is necessarily degrading; and that, finally, a special Act had to be passed in 1905 creating authorities to administer assistance for unemployed workmen whom public opinion would no longer allow to be left to the tender mercies of a deterrent policy of Poor Relief. That the same result would follow with even greater certainty were public bodies to decline to provide for necessitous school children is obvious, inasmuch as to the foolish sentimentality of the ordinary person the sufferings of childhood make a special appeal. Indeed it has followed already. In the days when Education Authorities had no power to spend public money on the provision of meals for school children, what happened was that the provision of meals was begun by private persons, and in the towns which have not put the Act of 1906 into force such private provision obtains at the present day. Such extra-legal intervention has all the disadvantages ascribed to the public provision of meals, for one can scarcely accept the extravagant contention that while soup supplied by

an Education Authority pauperises, soup tickets supplied by a philanthropic society do not. And it has few of its advantages. For private philanthropy tends to be more irregular and arbitrary in its administration than most public authorities. Since it cannot cover the whole area of distress, its selection of children to be fed is more capricious; since its funds are raised by appeals *ad misericordiam* they often fail when they are needed most; and when, as often happens, more than one agency enters the field, the result is overlapping and duplication. Nor will it seem a minor evil to those who care for the civic spirit that even the best-intentioned charity can never escape from the taint of patronage, can never be anything but a sop with which the rich relieve their consciences by ministering to the poor.

The statement that the feeding of school children weakens parental responsibility presumably means that the provision of meals at school induces parents to neglect to provide meals themselves. When one turns from these general considerations to examine how far this result has actually occurred, one is faced with the task of sifting a few grains of fact from a multitude of impressions. The first and most essential preliminary to the formation of any reasonable judgment is to determine the circumstances of those families one or more of whose members are receiving meals at school; and in order to throw some light on this point we give, in the following table, such particulars from six areas as are available:—<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The figures for Birmingham are taken from *The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, by Phyllis D. Winder, 1913, pp. 47-55; those for St. George's-in-the-East, from "The Story of a Children's Care Committee," by Rev. H. Iselin, in *Economic Review*, January, 1912, p. 47; those for Stoke, Bradford, St. Pancras and Bermondsey from case papers that we have analysed. These figures must not be taken as more than a somewhat rough indication of the state of affairs, for it is not always easy to deter-

Causes of distress of family.	Stoke.	Bradford.	Birmingham.	School in St. Pancras.	School in Bermondsey.	St. George's- in-the-East.	Total.
Unemployment ..	16	11	26	9	13	—	75
Casual employment ..	3	26	54	8	18	136	245
Short time .. ..	5	3	8	—	—	—	16
Regular work but low wages .. ..	—	16	6	1	2	—	25
Illness or disablement of father .. ..	15	19	47	5	9	52	147
Widows .. ..	16	41	40	10	9	22	138
Desertion or absence of father .. ..	3	32	19	2	2	14	72

It will be seen that the four largest classes of families consist of those in which the father is casually employed, is disabled by illness or accident, is dead or is unemployed. If one adds to these 605 families the 41 in which the father is paid low wages or is working short time, there is a total of 646 out of 718 families in which distress is due either to industrial causes or to a misfortune. Since men do not usually contract illness or die in order that their children may be fed at school, there is no question of the responsibility of the father being weakened in the 285 cases in which death or ill-health was the cause which led to the provision of school meals.

It is often argued, however, that the public provision of assistance is itself one cause of the distress

mine precisely into which category a particular case should be put. Probably the proportion of casually employed is somewhat understated; of the twenty-six, for instance, who are classed as unemployed at Birmingham, roughly one-third belonged to the class of permanent casuals, but were totally unemployed at the date of the enquiry. (*The Public Feeding of Elementary School Children*, p. 48.)



which it is designed to relieve, because it must necessarily exercise a deteriorating influence over industrial conditions. The knowledge that his children will be fed is likely, it is said, to lead a man to relax the demands which he makes on his employer. The knowledge that he need not offer a subsistence wage for a family leads the employer to offer worse terms to his employees, more irregular employment or lower rates of wages, with the result that the ratepayer relieves the employer of part of his wage bill. Cut off all public assistance, and "economic conditions will adjust themselves to the change." Now it is perfectly true that the need which prompts the provision of school meals does normally arise from bad industrial conditions, and that to allow those conditions to continue while merely mitigating their effects is an offence against morality and an outrage on commonsense. Whether school meals are desirable or not for their own sake, it is the right of the worker that industry should be organised in such a way that he should be able to provide for his children in the manner which he thinks best, and that he should not be compelled (as he often is at present) to choose between seeing them fed at school and seeing them half-starved at home. But the theory which we have stated goes much further than this. It holds that public provision is a *cause* of bad industrial conditions, and that the mere abolition of public provision would *in itself* result in those conditions being improved. It is obvious that, as far as certain economic evils are concerned, this doctrine does not hold good. Many children are underfed because their parents are suffering from sickness or accident incurred in the course of their employment. Clearly an employer will not be induced to render his processes safe merely by the fact that his employees' children will suffer if they are unsafe. Many children are

underfed because their parents are casually employed or altogether unemployed. Equally clearly there is no reason whatever to suppose that casual labour would cease because of their starvation; for if that were the case it would have ceased long ago. Nor again does the more specious doctrine that the wages of men are lowered by the provision of food for their children rest upon a securer foundation. In the nature of things it can neither be verified nor disproved by an appeal to facts; for the controversy is not concerning facts but concerning their interpretation. If we point out that in Bradford, when the Education (Provision of Meals) Act was first adopted in 1907, the majority of children fed were children of woolcombers, dyers' labourers, carters and builders' labourers, and that since 1907 the first three classes of workers have all received advances of wages, it may, of course, be answered that the advance would have been still greater if the children had not been fed.<sup>1</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> We may note that there are very few cases where the fathers of the children who are receiving school meals are, at the time, in regular work. (See table on page 211.) Many authorities refuse to consider such cases, while, where they are not necessarily barred, they amount as a rule, so far as we have found, except at Bradford, to a very small proportion of the total number of cases dealt with. In London a few committees have several such cases on their feeding-lists—a member of one committee, indeed, informed us that the fact that a man had a large family and low wages was, till recently, taken as a reason for granting meals to his children—but the great majority of committees either refuse to feed such children at all, or only do so in infrequent and exceptional circumstances. One or two instances were quoted to us where, as it was alleged, the provision of meals for the children had induced the father to acquiesce in the acceptance of a low wage without demanding an increase or seeking more remunerative employment. Thus we were told of a man who was formerly in charge of two furnaces at a wage of 24s. a week; one furnace was shut down, and he was offered the charge of the remaining one at 15s. This he accepted and the Care Committee had been feeding his children for a whole year. In another case, a man who was out of work, and was having all his children fed at school,

reality, however, the more this theory that the feeding of school children acts as a subsidy to wages is examined, the weaker does it appear. Historically it is traceable to the popular rendering of Ricardo introduced by Senior into the Poor Law Report of 1834, and it still contains marks of its origin. It assumes, in the first place, that wages are never above "subsistence level." For, clearly, if they are above it, there is no reason why they should be lowered if the cost of keeping a family is somewhat reduced. It assumes, in the second place, that they are never below the subsistence level of a family; for clearly, if they are, that in itself proves that the absence of public provision has not been able to maintain them. It assumes, in the third place, that the ability of workers to resist a reduction or to insist on an advance depends not upon the profitableness of the industry, nor upon the strength of their organisation, but solely upon their necessities. Of these assumptions the first two are untrue, and the last is not only untrue, but the exact opposite of the truth. In reality, as every trade unionist knows, the necessities of the non-wage earning members of a family do not keep wages up; they keep them down. A man who knows that a stoppage of work will plunge his family in starvation has little resisting power, and acquiesces in oppression to which he would otherwise refuse to submit. It is the strikers' wives and children who really break many strikes, and if the pressure of immediate necessity is removed the worker is not less likely, he is more likely, to hold out for better terms.

Nor is there much more substance in the theory that took a job at 15s. a week, a wage which, it was asserted, he would not otherwise have agreed to. But in such instances, infrequent and isolated as they are in any case, it is often found on analysis that the father, through some physical or mental infirmity, is incapable of performing a man's work, and unable, therefore, to earn more wages.

the provision of meals by a public authority weakens family life by "undermining parental responsibility." We are not, of course, concerned to deny that in the working classes as well as in the propertied classes there are a certain number of persons who are anxious "to get something for nothing." Cases, no doubt, do arise in which a parent who knows that the needs of his children will partially be met by the food supplied by an Education Authority may for that reason contemplate their fate when abandoned by him with less apprehension. At most, however, such cases constitute only 10 per cent. of those on the table, and the wisdom of withholding assistance from the remaining 90 per cent. merely in order to bring pressure upon this small fraction of all the families concerned is, to put the matter at the lowest, highly questionable. Moreover, even assuming that children who are neglected by their parents should be made to suffer in order to teach the latter a moral lesson, what probability is there that the lesson will be appreciated? In those families where a father is contemplating the desertion of his home, family relationships must obviously be weak and unstable. Is it seriously suggested that the mere fact that a public body is known to provide meals for children in attendance at school is sufficient to tilt the scale; that a man who is willing, *ex hypothesi*, to contemplate relinquishing his wife and younger children to the Poor Law will be deterred from leaving them merely by anxiety as to how the children of school age will obtain their midday meal; and that, when his apprehensions upon this point are removed, he will hasten to avail himself of his freedom in order to abandon them to much more serious evils than the loss of one meal per day? Such a suggestion carries its refutation on its face. When family life has been so disintegrated that a man is contemplating the desertion of his wife and

children, he is not likely either to be encouraged to do so by the mere fact that meals for school children are provided by a public body, or deterred from doing so by the fact that they are not. And a similar answer may be made to those who argue that "the result of feeding children at school is merely to encourage their parents to spend more upon drink." No one, of course, would deny that, if a man has already formed the habit of indulging his tastes without regard to the consequences, an increase in his means will enable him to spend more upon such indulgence. But that is a very different thing from accepting the implication that every accession in the income of a class merely leads it to fresh extravagance. The evidence, indeed, points in the opposite direction. During the last forty years there has been a great extension of public provision and a rise in money wages. Yet it is a matter of common knowledge that the consumption of alcoholic liquor per head of population has diminished and is still diminishing.

In reality, however, the idea that any large number of parents misuse the public provision of meals appears to be quite without any solid foundation, and to be a hasty generalisation from exceptional cases, which, because they are exceptional, are recorded by charitable persons with pious horror, and are given an undeserved and misleading notoriety. Almost all the actual evidence available points in the opposite direction. Again and again has it been stated to us that parents withdraw their children from the school meals as soon as an improvement in their circumstances enables them to provide food at home.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is often said that they withdraw them

<sup>1</sup> At Bradford a few years ago an enquiry was made with the object of discovering how far parents were obtaining the meals under false pretences. Two criteria were taken, firstly, whether the parents' statements as to the income earned were corroborated by their employers; secondly, how far the parents voluntarily

before they can properly afford to do so, and before the Canteen Committee thinks it wise for the school meals to be stopped, while many refrain from applying for meals until they are driven to do so by actual necessity. The truth is that behind the talk on parental responsibility which finds favour in certain sections of society—especially those where it is customary for parents to pay for their children to be fed at school during 30 to 40 weeks of the year—there is a considerable amount not only of ignorance but of hypocrisy. These critics are apt entirely to overlook the fact that during the last hundred years parental responsibilities, so far from being diminished, have been multiplied by the State. Middle-class parliaments have insisted that working-class parents should send their children to school, should dispense with the help of their earnings, should provide them with food, clothing and medical aid. More important, they forget that to insist on “responsibility” is meaningless unless the means of discharging it are available; for one cannot blame a man for failing to do what he wishes to do, but which he is prevented from doing by *force majeure*. Now this is precisely the position of the majority of such parents as are aided by school meals. *They* did not fix the wages of adult men at 18s. a week; *they* did not ordain that employment at the ports of London and Liverpool and Glasgow, and in a score of other trades, should be a gamble. *They* did not decree that those who direct industry should at intervals of five to seven years find it convenient to curtail production and turn their employees on to the streets. They are born into a

withdrew their children from the school meals when their circumstances improved. As a result of this enquiry it appeared that not more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. were unduly taking advantage of the meals. In many cases, where the parents' statements as to income did not tally with the employers' statements, it was found that the parents, in giving their average earnings, had overstated instead of understating them.

world where this is the established social order, an order which, as individuals, they are impotent to alter. If some of them occasionally give up a struggle which must often seem hopeless, at whose door does the blood of these men and their children lie? If it is desired that every man should regularly provide the whole maintenance of his family, then industry must be organised in such a way as to make it possible. Till that is done, to blame working people for acquiescing in circumstances which they did not create and which they detest is not only cruel but absurd. When every competent worker is secured regular employment and a living wage, it may be desirable that forms of public provision which exist at present should cease—though, even so, it is possible that the educational value of school meals will lead to their being continued. Till that happy condition is brought about they must be not only continued, but extended and improved.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

THE provision of meals for school children is, as we have pointed out, merely an attempt to mitigate some of the evil effects of industrial disorganisation. The principal end at which Society should aim is the removal of the causes, low wages, casual employment, recurrent periods of unemployment, and bad housing, which make them necessary. But meanwhile, as long as economic conditions remain as they are, some provision must be made for the present generation of school children. And the provision of school meals is not merely a question of relief, it is also a preventive measure. "Every step . . . in the direction of making and keeping the children healthy is a step towards diminishing the prevalence and lightening the burden of disease for the adult, and a relatively small rise in the standard of child health may represent a proportionately large gain in the physical health, capacity, and energy of the people as a whole."<sup>1</sup>

Granted, therefore, that the school meal is, for the present at any rate, a necessity, the question remains, for what children shall this meal be provided. We have described the methods of selection at present in force. We have seen that, though a few children are given school meals because they are found by the School Doctor to be ill-nourished, the great majority are selected by

<sup>1</sup> Report of Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1910, p. 1.



the teachers on the ground of poverty, a method which involves an enquiry into the parents' circumstances. We have shown some of the disadvantages inherent in this method of selection. The enquiries deter parents from applying. It is impossible for the teachers to discover all cases of underfed children. If the child is told by its parents to say that it has plenty to eat at home, how is the teacher to know that it is underfed? It is difficult, and in many cases quite impossible, to ascertain the amount of income coming in. Even if this could always be accurately ascertained, it would be difficult to discriminate with justice since other circumstances vary so widely. The enquiry is demoralising for the parents, putting a premium on deception and creating a sense of injustice. So unsatisfactory, indeed, has this system of investigation into income proved to be that there is a general consensus of opinion among adherents of the most opposing schools of thought that it must be given up. "As a Guardian of the poor and a member of the Charity Organisation Society, and in many other ways," says the late Canon Barnett, "I have come to see that no enquiry is adequate. I would not trust myself to enquire into any one's condition and be just. Enquiry is never satisfactory and is always irritating. . . . *I believe it is enquiry and investigation and suspicion which undermine parental responsibility.*"<sup>1</sup> Even so firm a supporter of Charity Organisation Society principles as the Rev. Henry Iselin would, we gather, prefer to the present inadequate system of investigation the provision of a meal for all children who like to come, without enquiry, though he would, of course, make the conditions of the meal in some way deterrent.<sup>2</sup> In discussing what is the

<sup>1</sup> Report of Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Qs. 2290, 2312. (The italics are mine.)

<sup>2</sup> See post, p. 222.

best method to be adopted we must, therefore, rule out any plan which involves an enquiry into the family income.

(i) We may consider first the proposal that the selection should be made by the School Doctor, school meals being ordered for all children whom he finds to be suffering from mal-nutrition. This method, which is strongly recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, has been adopted in a few towns, but only to a very limited extent and always in subordination to the system of selection based on the "poverty test." The selection by the "physical test" would obviate all the disadvantages arising from the demoralising enquiry into the parents' circumstances. On the other hand, the practical difficulties would be very great. At present a child is normally examined by the doctor only two or three times during the whole of its school career. Under the system proposed frequent examinations would be necessary, which would entail an enormous increase in the school medical staff. But, however frequent the examinations, the discovery of all underfed children would not be assured. It is not always possible for the doctor to determine the cause of malnutrition in any particular case; hence many children would be included who get plenty of food at home, but yet, from some other cause, do not thrive. More important, numbers of children would be excluded who fail to get sufficient food but who yet appear healthy. As a School Medical Officer points out, "temporary lack of food does not stamp the child in such a way that it is possible to detect past privations by ordinary inspection."<sup>1</sup> The underfeeding might be prolonged for a considerable time before its effects were apparent. But it is essential that underfeeding should be discovered before the child shows definite signs of

malnutrition, since the object to be aimed at is to prevent its ever getting into this state. The physical test, therefore, forms too narrow a basis to be satisfactorily employed, at any rate as the sole test, in the selection of children to be provided for.

(ii) We will consider next the plan to which we have already alluded, the provision of meals, free and without enquiry, for all children who like to come, it being understood that the meals are intended only for "necessitous" children, *i.e.*, those children who through poverty are unable to obtain an adequate supply of food at home. Those who aim at making this provision in some way deterrent suggest a breakfast of porridge, the time of the meal and the nature of the food providing a test of need. "As the man inside the workhouse must not have better, but a decidedly worse, treatment than the man outside, so if the food be nourishing but not too palatable it may chance that only the truly necessitous may apply."<sup>1</sup> Children who can obtain food at home will prefer to do so. But it is found in practice that it is not only the children who can get sufficient food at home who are deterred by such a device, but that the "truly necessitous" also refuse to come. Such a system, in fact, defeats its own ends. It is futile to provide meals for all underfed children and at the same time to make that provision so deterrent that those for whom it is intended decline to avail themselves of it. Even if there is no intention of making the provision deterrent, the idea that the meals are meant only for necessitous children will, in fact, make it so; many parents will prefer to feed their children at home on a totally inadequate diet rather than disclose their poverty by sending them to the school meals. The "poverty test" in fact, in

<sup>1</sup> "A New Poor Law for Children," by Rev. Henry Iselin, in *Charity Organisation Review*, March, 1909, p. 170.

whatever form it may be applied, will exclude numbers of children whom it is desirable to provide for.

(iii) The two methods that we have described would each leave a large class of children without provision. The first would fail to discover numbers of children who are underfed, but who do not show obvious signs of malnutrition. The second would not touch those cases where the children cannot get sufficient food at home, but where the parents are too proud to accept school meals for them. A combination of the two methods would remove both these objections. The provision of meals, free and without enquiry, for all necessitous children, would secure the feeding of the majority of those who are underfed, while the School Doctor would generally discover those cases where the parents try to conceal the fact that they cannot give their children sufficient food at home. For these children the doctor would, of course, order school meals. This method would not obviate the necessity of a great increase in the school medical service. Moreover, by any of the methods discussed, provision would be made only for underfed children. There would remain the hosts who are unsuitably fed; the worst of these cases would, of course, be discovered by the doctor, but only the worst cases. And, again, no provision would be made for the children whose mothers are at work all day and consequently unable to provide a midday meal, and for whom the school dinner would be a great convenience, for which the parents would, in many cases, be willing to pay.

(iv) There remains the only logical conclusion, the provision of a meal for all school children, as part of the school curriculum. Such a provision need not necessarily be compulsory, though it should be so in all cases where the School Doctor recommends it. From every point of view, the psychological, the medical and the educational,

the advantages to be gained from such a course would be enormous. General provision for all would do away with all pauperising discrimination between the necessitous and the non-necessitous. On the medical side it would be difficult to over-estimate the benefits to be secured. On this point the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education has recently pronounced in no measured terms. "From a purely scientific point of view," he declared, "if there was one thing he was allowed to do for the six million children, if he wanted to rear an imperial race, it would be to feed them. . . . The great, urgent, pressing need was nutrition. With that they could get better brains and a better race."<sup>1</sup> The beneficial results already observed in the case of children who have received a regular course of school meals would be extended to all. Then, again, the common meal would serve as an opportunity for the exercise of many little acts of consideration for one another. The teachers would be brought into more intimate relations with the children, for they get to know the children better at meal time than in any other way. The school meal would serve as an object lesson; taken in conjunction with the teaching of housewifery and cookery in the schools, it would speedily raise the standard in the homes. There would be another advantage. Adequate rest after the meal could be insisted on, followed by healthy play in the open air in the playground instead of in stuffy rooms and backyards. In the rural districts, as we have already shown, it is imperative that dinner should be provided for all who want to stay. Numbers of children are unable to return home, and it is almost impossible for the parents to provide suitable cold food for them to take with them; even when they can go home to dinner they

<sup>1</sup>, Report of Proceedings of University Extension Oxford Summer Meeting, 1913, p. 17.

frequently have a long walk, with the consequence that the meal must be eaten hastily and the children hurry back to school immediately afterwards.

If general provision is made, ought the parents to be required to pay or should the meal be free to all? The first plan has much to recommend it and has been advocated in many quarters. At the recent conference at the Guildhall on School Feeding, for instance, there appeared to be a general agreement in favour of this course. The experience of the Special Schools for Defective Children, and some of the rural schools, where a midday meal or hot cocoa is provided, shows that numbers of parents are able to pay, and there does not appear to be much difficulty in collecting the payment.<sup>1</sup> And in the ordinary elementary schools, where little provision is made for paying cases, it would appear that there does exist a certain demand for such provision.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it must be admitted that it is a question whether any large number of parents would voluntarily pay for their children's meals when it was known that provision was made for all and that other children were receiving the meal free. The payment would have to be left to the parent's conscience, for any attempt to try to decide in which cases payment should be insisted on and in which it should be remitted would introduce again the evils of the present system, with its demoralising enquiry into the parents' circumstances—though in a somewhat mitigated form, since no distinction would be made between the paying and the non-paying children, and the latter

<sup>1</sup> See ante, pp. 120, 123-5, 155-6.

<sup>2</sup> In the ordinary elementary schools in some of the Scottish towns, large numbers of children pay for the dinners. (See Appendix II., pp. 242, 245, 246.)

would not be marked off as a separate class as at present. Another difficulty, though a minor one, would arise in the fixing of the price to be charged. In the more prosperous districts the dinner might be self-supporting, but in the poorest localities it would hardly be possible to charge an amount sufficient to cover the cost of the food.

The provision of a free meal for all would obviate these difficulties. It will be objected at once that such a plan will undermine parental responsibility, but, as we have shown in the previous chapter, communal provision of other services has not had this result. And against this lightening of parental burdens must be set the continual increase of duties which are being placed upon them. A more serious objection lies in the expense. Taking the cost of a school dinner at  $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head,<sup>1</sup> the provision of one meal a day for five days a week during term time for all the six million school children in England, Wales and Scotland would cost about £12,500,000. This is, of course, an outside estimate, for it would probably be found that a considerable number of parents would prefer to have their children at home to dinner rather than send them to the school meal; and the provision might be confined to schools in poor districts.

<sup>1</sup> The cost depends, of course, on the kind of food provided. At Bradford, where a two-course dinner is given, the total cost per meal, for administrative charges (the upkeep of the Cooking Depot, the rent of the dining-rooms, the wages of the staff, payment for supervision, the carriage of the food, sinking fund, etc.), amounted in 1912-13 to 1·2d., and for food to 1·26d., making a total of 2·46d. About one-third of the meals supplied were breakfasts, which are usually rather cheaper than dinners, so that the cost per dinner would be slightly more. (Bradford Education Committee, Return as to the Working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act for the year ending March 31, 1913). At Edinburgh, where a one-course dinner is given, the cost is 9d. for food and 1d. for administrative charges. (Report of the Edinburgh School Board for 1912-13, p. 35.)

To the actual cost of supplying the meals there must be added the initial outlay incurred in providing dining-rooms and appliances.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there would be a great saving of time and energy which is now consumed in making enquiries. And the provision of school meals would tend to diminish the amount which will otherwise have to be spent in the near future on medical treatment. Food, as Sir George Newman has pointed out, is of more importance than drugs and surgical treatment, and if regular meals were provided there would be much less need for school clinics.<sup>2</sup> The expenditure on the provision of school meals would, indeed, be nationally a most profitable investment; it would be amply justified by the improved physique of the rising generation and by the consequent increase in their efficiency. It would be far more productive, in fact, than much of the money which is now spent on education, than the outlay, for instance, on the erection of huge school buildings, an outlay the necessity of which is becoming more and more questionable in the light of the proved superiority of open-air education.

Unfortunately the general provision of a school dinner will not be a complete solution of the problem. There will remain the children for whom one meal a day will not be sufficient, while the discontinuance of the meals during the holidays will cause them serious suffering. Experience has amply shown the necessity of the meals being continued during the holidays and power must be

<sup>1</sup> We must add one other item of expenditure, which will be necessary whatever course be adopted with regard to the provision of meals, namely, the appointment of salaried organisers for each group of schools, to supervise the work of medical treatment, after-care, and all other activities directed to the physical well-being of the child.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Proceedings of University Extension Oxford Summer Meeting, 1913, p. 17.



given to the Local Education Authorities to make this provision when it is required. They must also be allowed to provide an additional meal for those children for whom dinner alone is not sufficient. Any proposal to limit the provision to one meal could not, indeed, be seriously entertained, for numbers of Local Authorities are already supplying this extra food and would resist any curtailment of their powers in this respect. But when we come to consider for what children this additional provision shall be made, we are face to face with all the old difficulties of selection. Obviously it cannot be made for all. Perhaps the best method would be to provide for all children who liked to come, whilst attendance should be obligatory on those for whom the School Doctor ordered extra nourishment. Such a prospect would be viewed with alarm by many, but the numbers to be provided for would probably not be excessive, if it was understood that this extra provision was intended only for necessitous or delicate children. It is found that the attendance drops off considerably during the holidays, and that it is always less for a breakfast than for a dinner; it requires more exertion to come in time for breakfast, while the fare provided is not so popular. Probably the danger would be rather on the side of too few children being provided for than too many.

No plan that can be proposed is free from disadvantages. And this brings us back to the point at which we started in this chapter. From the nature of the case, no attempt to deal with effects only, while causes remain untouched, can be wholly satisfactory. Provision must be made for the present generation of school children; their necessities must be relieved and future inefficiency due to underfeeding in childhood must be prevented. But at the same time, and above all, a determined attack must be made on the evils which lie at the root of the children's

malnutrition. Industrial conditions must be so organised that it is possible for every man himself to provide for his children at least the requisite minimum of food, clothing and other necessities.

### *Summary of Conclusions*

1. That, so long as economic conditions remain as they are, the provision of school meals is a necessity.

2. That no method of selection of the children who are to receive the meals can be satisfactory, and that all attempts at picking and choosing should, therefore, be abandoned. The meal should be provided for all children who like to come, without any enquiry into their parents' circumstances. Attendance should be compulsory if recommended by the School Medical Officer.

3. That the meal should be regarded as part of the school curriculum and should be educational. It should be served, as far as practicable, on the school premises, in rooms which are not used as class-rooms ; the plan of sending the children to eating-houses or to large centres should be discontinued. Some of the teachers should be present to supervise the children, who should be taught to set the tables and to wait on one another. The meal should be served as attractively as possible.

4. The dietary should be drawn up in consultation with the School Medical Officer, with a view to the physiological requirements of the children, special attention being paid to the infants.

5. The preparation of the food should not be entrusted to caterers, but should be undertaken by the Local Education Authority.

6. The meals should be continued throughout the school year, and, if necessary, during the holidays.



## APPENDIX I

### EXAMPLES OF MENUS

(I) BRADFORD

SPRING DIETARY, 1913

Dinners to be repeated every four weeks

1st week :

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Monday.    | Brown vegetable soup.<br>Rice pudding.                                |
| Tuesday.   | Cottage pie ; green peas.<br>Stewed fruit.                            |
| Wednesday. | Potato and onion soup.<br>Plum cake (Cocoanut cake alternate months). |
| Thursday.  | Meat and potato hash ; beans.<br>Rice pudding.                        |
| Friday.    | Fish and potato pie ; parsley sauce ;<br>peas.<br>Ground rice.        |

2nd week :

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Monday.    | Potato and onion soup.<br>Rice pudding.            |
| Tuesday.   | Shepherd's pie.<br>Stewed fruit.                   |
| Wednesday. | Yorkshire pudding ; gravy ; peas.<br>Sago pudding. |

Thursday.      Scotch barley broth.  
Currant pastry.

Friday.          Fish and potato pie ; parsley sauce ;  
                         peas.  
Rice and sultanas.

3rd week :

Monday.          Brown vegetable soup.  
Rice pudding.

Tuesday.        Meat and potato hash ; beans.  
Stewed fruit.

Wednesday.     Potato and onion soup.  
Ginger pudding and sweet sauce.

Thursday.        Stewed beef and gravy ; mashed  
                         potatoes.  
Baked jam roll.

Friday.          Fish and potato pie ; parsley sauce ;  
                         peas.  
Semolina pudding.

4th week :

Monday.          Potato and onion soup.  
Wholemeal cake.

Tuesday.        Hashed beef and savoury balls.  
Rice pudding.

Wednesday.     Yorkshire cheese pudding ; peas and  
                         gravy.  
Stewed fruit.

Thursday.        Shepherd's pie ; green peas.  
Sago pudding.

Friday.          Fish and potato pie ; parsley sauce.  
Rice and sultanas.

(2) LEEDS.

WINTER DIETARY.

Repeated week after week.

- Monday. Pea soup ; brown and white bread.  
Parkin.
- Tuesday. Shepherd's pie ; brown and white bread.  
Buns or cake.
- Wednesday (except during Advent and Lent)—  
Irish stew ; brown and white bread.  
Parkin.
- Wednesday (during Advent and Lent)—  
Lentil and tomato soup (alternately with fish pie) ; brown and white bread.  
Parkin.
- Thursday. Crust pie ; brown or white bread.  
Buns or cake.
- Friday. Lentil and tomato soup (alternately with fish pie) ; brown and white bread.  
Parkin.
- (Some other kind of cake or bun is now sometimes substituted for parkin.)

SUMMER DIETARY.

- Monday. Rice pudding ; stewed fruit.  
Currant cake.
- Tuesday. Shepherd's pie ; brown and white bread.  
Seed cake.
- Wednesday. Crust pie ; brown and white bread.  
Currant cake.

Thursday.	Potted meat sandwiches. Rice pudding.
Friday.	Lentil and tomato soup; white and brown bread. Buns.

## (3) WEST HAM

## WINTER DIETARY

Monday.	Irish stew. Brown bread and jam.
Tuesday.	Lentil soup. Baked currant pudding.
Wednesday.	Roast mutton; potatoes; haricot beans; bread.
Thursday.	Mince. Suet pudding; jam or stewed fruit.
Friday.	Soup. Rice with jam or treacle.

(During summer lighter food is substituted.)

## (4) ACTON

Monday.	Soup and bread. Currant roll.
Tuesday.	Stewed meat; cabbage; potatoes.
Wednesday.	Soup and bread. Plain suet pudding with syrup.
Thursday.	Irish stew and potatoes. Plain pudding.
Friday.	Soup and bread. Rice pudding.
Saturday.	Stewed meat and two vegetables.

This menu is theoretically repeated week after week throughout the year, but in practice it is not always strictly adhered to.

## (5) LONDON

*Dinners which may be supplied by the Alexandra Trust.*  
(See Minutes of the L.C.C., Dec 17, 18, 1912.)

## WINTER MENU

- 1 Haricot bean soup ; bread.  
Treacle pudding.
- 2 Fish and potato pie ; bread.  
Baked raisin pudding.
- 3 Pea soup ; bread baked in dripping.  
Fig pudding.
- 4 Stewed beef or mutton ; dumplings ; steamed  
potatoes ; bread.
- 5 Beef stewed with peas ; dumplings ; potatoes ;  
bread.
- 6 Mutton stewed with haricot beans ; steamed  
potatoes ; bread.  
Suet pudding.
- 7 Meat and potato pie ; bread.
- 8 Meat pudding.
- 9 Toad-in-the-hole ; potatoes ; bread.
- 10 Rice pudding ; two slices of bread and butter.

## SUMMER MENU

- 1 Rice pudding ; two slices of bread and butter.
- 2 Toad-in-the-hole ; potatoes ; bread.
- 3 Meat pies ; potatoes ; bread.
- 4 Meat pudding ; potatoes ; bread.
- 5 Cold meat pie ; fruit roll.
- 6 Meat sandwich ; piece of cake.
- 7 (For Infants ) Hot milk and bread ; fruit roll.



## DINNERS FOR INFANTS.

- 1 Liquid part of winter dinner menus, Nos. 4, 5, 6.
- 2 Rice, tapioca, macaroni or barley pudding, with two slices of sultana bread and butter.
- 3 Stew—very fine mince.
- 4 Baked custard, with bread and butter.
- 5 Savory custard, with bread and butter.

## (6) GRASSINGTON (YORKSHIRE).

SAMPLE MENUS.<sup>1</sup>

Monday.	Haricot bean soup ; bread. Steamed suet pudding and treacle.
Tuesday.	Meat and potato pies with crusts on. Rice pudding.
Wednesday.	Onion soup ; bread. Steamed ginger pudding ; sweet sauce.
Thursday.	Meat and potato pie with crusts on. Sago pudding.
Friday.	Yorkshire pudding ; gravy ; mashed potato. Marmalade pudding ; sweet sauce.
Monday.	Potato soup ; bread. Steamed ginger pudding ; sweet sauce.
Tuesday.	Meat and potato pies with crusts on. Cornflour pudding.
Wednesday.	Pea soup. Plain plum puddings ; sweet sauce.
Thursday.	Meat and potato pies with crusts on. Rice pudding.
Friday.	Shepherd's pie (minced meat, mashed potato) Sago pudding.

<sup>1</sup> There appears to be no fixed dietary, the dinners being varied each week.

## APPENDIX II

### THE PROVISION OF MEALS IN SCOTLAND

THE Provision of Meals Act of 1906 applied only to England and Wales. As we have seen, the attempt of the House of Commons to extend its operations to Scotland was defeated in the House of Lords, and it was not till 1908 that the Scottish School Boards were granted power to utilise the rates for the provision of food.<sup>1</sup> By the Education (Scotland) Act passed in that year it was enacted that a School Board might, either by itself or in combination with other School Boards, provide accommodation, apparatus and service for the preparation and supply of meals.<sup>2</sup> Where it appeared that a child was unable by lack of food or clothing to take full advantage of the education provided, the School Board should, after due warning, summon the parent or guardian to appear and give an explanation of the child's condition. If the explanation was not forthcoming or was insufficient or unsatisfactory, and the condition of the child was due to neglect, the Procurator Fiscal should prosecute the parents under the Prevention of Cruelty Act.<sup>3</sup> If, however, it appeared that the parent or guardian, through poverty or ill-health, was unable to supply sufficient food or clothing, the School Board, if satisfied that the necessities of the case would not be met by voluntary agency, should make "such provision for the child

<sup>1</sup> See ante, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> 8 Edward VII., c. 63, sec. 3 (2).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 6 (1).

. . . as they deem necessary " out of the school fund.<sup>1</sup> Temporary provision might be made by the School Board pending completion of procedure against the parents, and the cost of such provision might be recovered.<sup>2</sup> The powers conferred upon Scottish School Boards thus differed in several respects from those conferred on English Local Authorities by the Act of 1906. The School Boards were granted power not only to provide food but also clothing, and no limitation was placed upon the amount which might be spent out of the rates on the provision of these necessities. Moreover, the Act was not permissive. In England, when in any area school children are suffering from lack of food, and voluntary funds are not forthcoming to meet their needs, the Local Education Authority *may* provide food out of the rates ; in Scotland the School Board *shall* make such provision.

No report has yet been published by the Scottish Education Department as to the action taken either by the School Boards or by voluntary agencies in the work of the provision of meals. As far as we can gather from the reports of the Chief Inspectors, though several Boards co-operate with voluntary agencies and provide apparatus and service, in only some half-dozen towns, *e.g.*, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Govan, Leith, Perth, has the system of providing food out of the rates been adopted to any extent.<sup>3</sup> The increase in expenditure on the provision of meals, etc., for necessitous children under the Act of 1908 is shown by the following table :—<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 6 (2).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> During the coal strike in the spring of 1912, some Boards in the Fife district took action under section 6 and provided free meals. (Report of the Chief Inspector for the Southern Division for 1912, p. 11.)

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Committee of Council on Education in Scotland, 1912-13, p. 4.

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	Providing Accommoda- tion for Meals, Sec. 3(2).	Food, Clothing or other expenditure (for necessi- tous children) Sec. 6.	Total.
	£	£	£
1908-9 .. .. .	67	11	78
(Part of year only).			
1909-10 .. .. .	290	921	1,211
1910-11 .. .. .	3,777	3,768	7,545
1911-12 .. .. .	4,586	3,172	7,758

In Edinburgh, the necessity for feeding underfed school children was recognised<sup>1</sup> very soon after the passing of the Education Act of 1872. The Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor early undertook to deal with cases reported by the Attendance Officers. In 1878 Miss Flora Stevenson started a scheme for feeding and clothing destitute children, on condition that children so assisted must attend school.<sup>2</sup> Towards the close of the nineteenth century numerous other voluntary organisations appear to have been established.<sup>3</sup> As in other towns the provision by these voluntary agencies proved inadequate and unsatisfactory. Meals were supplied only for about ten weeks in the year. They were served in eating-houses, where the food was poor and the arrangements of the roughest description. The children were selected by the teachers and attendance officers, and there was no adequate investigation into the cases. In the autumn of 1909 the Lord Provost summoned a conference to discuss the question, and a scheme

<sup>1</sup> For the following account I am mainly indebted to the kindness of Mrs. Leslie Mackenzie and Mr. I. H. Cunningham.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Q. 4211; Report of Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) 1903, Vol. II., Q. 2396.

<sup>3</sup> Report of Special Sub-Committee on Meals for School Children, in Minutes of London School Board, July 25, 1889, Vol. 31, p. 382.

of co-operation between the School Board and the two chief voluntary agencies, the Flora Stevenson Committee and the Courant Fund, was drawn up, by which the voluntary funds were pooled, and cases were decided by a committee consisting of representatives of the three bodies concerned. In the following year the School Board undertook the entire responsibility for the provision of meals, though it still relied on voluntary contributions. It decided to establish a cooking centre of its own instead of entrusting the supply of the meals to caterers. Care Committees of voluntary workers were to be appointed for each group of schools to investigate all cases of destitution, and to "keep in continuous and sympathetic touch" with the families. Cases were to be recommended by the medical officer, school nurses, teachers and attendance officers, in addition to applications made by the parents; the Care Committee was also itself to take the initiative in searching out cases of destitution. To secure uniformity of treatment a Central Care Committee, composed of representatives of the School Board and the voluntary agencies, was appointed to give the final decision on all cases; this central committee was also to supervise the collection of the necessary funds, and to rouse general interest in the problem of school feeding.<sup>1</sup> The Courant Fund declined to act with the Board under this scheme, but the Flora Stevenson Committee co-operated cordially.

The cooking centre was opened in January, 1911, and by the end of the year the system of Care Committees was in working order. Voluntary subscriptions rapidly decreased, however, and in May, 1912, the Board resolved that recourse must be had to the rates. The Central Care Committee thereupon ceased to exist, its duties being

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh School Board, Memorandum on the Feeding of School Children, 1910, pp. 5-6.

transferred to the Attendance Committee. The local Care Committees, of which eight had been appointed, were continued for a time, but at the beginning of 1913 the duty of investigation was entrusted to the Attendance Officers,<sup>1</sup> and the local committees also were given up. The system had not worked entirely without friction. The method of investigation was cumbersome and slow, and the local committees were not in sufficiently close touch with the Central Committee. The committees were too large; from one to nine schools were allocated to each, and the membership usually numbered about twenty-five. But it is to be regretted that the system has been entirely abandoned. Apart from the work of investigation, which, as we have shown elsewhere, is not a task which can suitably be entrusted to voluntary workers, there are many matters connected with the welfare of the school child in which the volunteer's services can be of the greatest value.

The meal given is always dinner, though in one of the poorest districts breakfasts have recently been started; for these a halfpenny is charged, except to those children who are on the free list. Till lately two courses were supplied at dinner, but now usually only one is given. The meals are served ordinarily in the schools, but in one or two places in halls hired for the purpose. From reports that we have received the arrangements seem to compare very favourably with those obtaining in most English dining-centres. The teachers frequently take a great interest in the question and supervise the meals. Some of the elder boys and girls help to serve the food and wait on the children. The infants are served at a separate table or, perhaps, in a separate room. Attention is paid to cleanliness and tidiness, and the children's manners are very good.

<sup>1</sup> Two special officers have been appointed to make enquiries.

Provision is made not only for necessitous<sup>1</sup> children, but for those who can pay part or the whole of the cost. Non-necessitous children may obtain a dinner on payment of 2d., while the "semi-necessitous" may pay 1d. It is noteworthy that the number of free dinners is decreasing, while the number of penny dinners is on the increase. Of the 413,000 meals supplied during 1912-13, nearly 50 per cent. were supplied to "semi-necessitous" children on payment of 1d.; about 25 per cent. were given free, the remaining 25 per cent. being supplied to children whose parents were receiving relief from the Parish Council, children in Higher Grade and Special Schools, and the elder girls who helped in serving the meals.<sup>2</sup> The work of investigation has been greatly reduced by the introduction of the penny dinner, and it has been suggested that the provision of a half-penny dinner would still further diminish the need for free dinners, and consequently the need for investigation.

For many years before the School Board undertook the responsibility for providing for its underfed children, the Parish Council was supplying meals to the children of mothers who were receiving parish relief. The Report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training in 1903 had drawn attention to the question of underfeeding among children, and the Parish Council determined to provide meals for the children for whose relief it was responsible, in order to ensure that no complaint might

<sup>1</sup> There is no fixed scale in determining which children are necessitous, but free meals are usually granted if the gross income of the household is less than 3s. a head.

<sup>2</sup> For the week ending December 19, 1913, the number of children fed was:—

Necessitous	..	..	442
Paying children	..	..	1,389
Parish Council children	..	..	207

be brought against it.<sup>1</sup> Hot dinners were provided every day except Sunday.<sup>2</sup> They were intended chiefly for children whose mothers were at work all day, but tickets were also given in cases where an increase of relief would not have benefited the children, or where the children had a consumptive tendency.<sup>3</sup> The dinners were served in eating-houses where "the conditions as to the serving of the meals, and the manners of the children—entirely without supervision—" were "anything but civilising."<sup>4</sup> When the School Board took over the general arrangements for feeding, it seemed at first as if the Parish Council would still continue its own methods, but the superiority of the Board's scheme was soon apparent, and the Parish Council made an arrangement with it by which children whose mothers were receiving relief would have meals at school, the Council paying 1½d. per meal to the School Board.<sup>5</sup>

In Glasgow, as in Edinburgh, the provision of meals was very early undertaken by voluntary societies. As far back as 1869 the Glasgow Poor Children's Dinner Table Society was founded,<sup>6</sup> and in 1875 another philanthropic society established Day Refuges, which were intended chiefly for children of widows or widowers who were at work all day, and at which three meals were supplied daily.<sup>7</sup> The Poor Children's Dinner Table

<sup>1</sup> Evidence before the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, Vol. VI., Qs. 61553-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 61371 (12).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 55247 (31).

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, 8vo edition, Vol. III., p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> "Administrative problems arising out of Child Feeding," by J. A. Young, in *Proceedings of the National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution*, 1911, pp. 339-340.

<sup>6</sup> Report of Select Committee on Education (Provision of Meals) Bills (England and Scotland), 1906, Qs. 3075-8.

<sup>7</sup> Evidence before the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909,



Society continued to be the chief agency for supplying meals till 1910, when voluntary contributions proved inadequate and the School Board took over the provision of the meals. A central cooking centre, with modern labour-saving appliances, was built, the food being distributed to the different centres by motor waggon. The meals are served either in the schools or in halls hired for the purpose. The supervision is usually undertaken by the attendants; at some centres assistance is given by members of the old dinner societies, but the numbers are falling off. Only necessitous children are fed. Each case is decided on its merits, but dinners are not usually granted if the family income exceeds 3s. per head.<sup>1</sup> The children are selected by the school doctors, nurses, attendance officers or teachers, and enquiries are made by the attendance officers, immediate provision being made in urgent cases. Boots and clothing, which up to 1912 were supplied by the Poor Children's Clothing Scheme, are now provided by the School Board.<sup>2</sup> In the special schools for the physically defective, dinner is provided for practically all the children, and the parents pay. The food is good in quality and served in an attractive manner, tablecloths of some kind and flowers being provided. The supervision is undertaken by the nurses and teachers.

Perth was one of the earliest School Boards to use its powers under the Act of 1908 and to provide food and clothing out of the rates, the system being begun in 1909. A Care Committee was appointed in 1911 to assist the School Board in looking after the welfare of the children and to take part in the distribution of the meals; the Vol. VI., Q. 59728 (18); Report of London School Board on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, p. 253.

<sup>1</sup> See Dundee School Board, Report on the Feeding of School Children, 1913, p. 31.

Report of Glasgow School Board for 1911-12, p. 13.

members visit the homes, but apparently have no voice in the selection of the children.<sup>1</sup> The dinners are mostly served in a Church Hall and are supervised by the Care Committee and members of the School Board. Most of the dinners are supplied free, only a small proportion being paid for.<sup>2</sup> In the matter of boots, if a child is found improperly shod, a notice is sent by the Board to the parents. If they do not provide boots themselves, the Board supplies them and calls upon the parents to pay<sup>3</sup>; about two-thirds of the money thus spent is recovered from the parents.<sup>4</sup>

In most towns, as we have said, the cost of the food is still borne out of voluntary funds, whether the School Board itself undertakes the provision of meals, or whether this is done by a voluntary society.

In Dundee provision has been made by "The Free and Assisted Dinner Fund" since the winter of 1884-5.<sup>5</sup> The meals are given usually in the schools, but sometimes in coffee houses. The prevailing menu appears to be soup. In view of the large number of married women who are industrially employed at Dundee, the school meal is a great convenience. A large proportion of the children, something like two-thirds in fact, make some payment towards the meal.<sup>6</sup> But the price charged is very low; a single bowl of soup costs a halfpenny, while the payment of a penny a week secures a bowl daily.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report of Chief Inspector for Southern Division for 1912, pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> Perth School Board, Officers' Report on the supplying of Meals and Boots to School Children, 1912-13, pp. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Report of Chief Inspector for Southern Division for 1912, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Perth School Board, Officers' Report, 1912-13, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Dundee School Board, Report on the Feeding of School Children, 1913, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

At Paisley also a large proportion of the children pay. Soup and bread, or, if the children prefer, cocoa and bread, etc., is provided for the sum of one halfpenny, the poorest children receiving it free. The balance of expenditure on food is met from voluntary funds; the School Board pays all expenses of administration.<sup>1</sup> In Aberdeen the work of providing meals, which had formerly been undertaken by the Aberdeen Educational Trust, was transferred in 1909 to the School Board, together with the income which the Trust had devoted to this purpose.<sup>2</sup> At Greenock the School Board have raised a voluntary fund for the provision of books, boots or food for necessitous children, but it has not been found necessary to supply any meals within the last two years. In Inverness provision is made by a voluntary organisation, the children being sent to local eating-houses.

Turning now to the rural districts, we may mention an early experiment somewhat similar to that at Rousdon, to which we have already referred. In 1878 the minister of the small country parish of Farnell came to the conclusion that the attendance at school would be more regular, and the children would derive more profit from the education given if a hot midday meal were provided. Accordingly a soup kitchen was instituted at the school, the plant being provided by voluntary contributions. A charge was made of a halfpenny per meal or 1d. per family, where there were more than two children. Practically all the children availed themselves of the provision. The effects were soon visible, not only in improved attendance—the grant earned rose from £89 in 1878 to £99 in 1883—but in greater immunity from epidemics and

<sup>1</sup> In the special schools for defective children at Paisley a two-course dinner is provided at a charge of 8d. a week.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Chief Inspector for the Northern Division for 1911, p. 24.

illness than in neighbouring schools, and in the greater buoyancy of spirits of the children.<sup>1</sup>

In this matter of providing a midday meal for the children attending rural schools, Scotland would appear to be, on the whole, in advance of England, though the extent of the provision made varies considerably in different districts. Thus, in the Border Counties, very few schools make any arrangements,<sup>2</sup> while in Fifeshire, where the Inspector "has consistently pressed upon managers" the necessity for providing dinners, the attitude of most of the rural Boards is one of "stolid apathy."<sup>3</sup> In Aberdeenshire, on the other hand, a cup of cocoa or a plate of soup is provided in most of the country schools,<sup>4</sup> and in the county of Inverness almost all the schools provide some sort of hot liquid.<sup>5</sup> In Kincardineshire it was reported in 1906 that the soup kitchen was a "universal institution."<sup>6</sup> The meals may be paid for by the children, these payments being supplemented by voluntary contributions in money or in kind.

But even where it is the rule to find cocoa or soup supplied, it is inadequate for the wants of many of the children, who require a more substantial and nourishing midday meal. Moreover, the provision appears as a rule to be confined to the winter months, a limitation patently absurd, since the *raison d'être* of the meals is not

<sup>1</sup> "Can a sufficient mid-day meal be given to poor school children . . . for . . . less than one penny?" by Sir Henry Peek, 1883, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Chief Inspector for the Southern Division for 1911, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>4</sup> First Report on Medical Inspection of School Children in Scotland, by Dr. Leslie Mackenzie, 1913, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> "The Diet of Country Elementary School Children," by Dr. Gordon A. Lang, in *Rearing an Imperial Race*, edited by C. E. Hecht, 1913, p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> Report of Chief Inspector for Northern Division for 1906.

so much the poverty of the parents, a condition which may fluctuate according to the seasons, but the fact that the distances are, in many cases, too great to allow the children time to return home at midday—which condition is, of course, constant the whole year round.

## APPENDIX III

### THE PROVISION OF MEALS ABROAD

We have not been able to make any original enquiry into the systems of school feeding existing in other countries. The following history of the "Cantines Scolaires" in Paris and brief notes as to the provision made in other foreign towns may, however, be useful for purposes of reference, and as showing how widespread has been the movement for the feeding of school children. The information as to foreign towns other than Paris is derived mainly from *Prize Essays on Feeding School Children*, 1890; *Report of London School Board on Underfed Children attending School*, 1899, Appendix ix., pp. 255-272; *Feeding of School Children in Continental and American Cities* (Cd. 2926), 1906; *The Free Feeding of School Children*, a reprint of the reports by the Special Sanitary Commissioner of the *Lancet*, 2nd edition, 1907; while fuller and more recent information is to be found in *School Feeding, its Practice at Home and Abroad*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913.

#### (a) FRANCE

##### (i) *The Cantines Scolaires in Paris*

Paris has long offered to other cities an inspiring example of an efficient and uniform system for feeding poor school children. She was the first to make systematic provision on a large scale. She had a basis of organisation ready to her hand in the *Caisses des Ecoles*

These bodies correspond in some degree to the English Care Committees, though with a far wider sphere of action. The original object of these school funds was to encourage school attendance by rewards to industrious pupils and help to the needy. The first *Caisse* was established in 1849 by the National Guard in the second *arrondissement*, and gradually the system spread. In 1867 a law was passed encouraging the formation of *Caisses* in every *commune*, and directing that their revenues were to consist of voluntary subscriptions and subventions by the commune, department or state.<sup>1</sup> This law was merely permissive, but in 1882, by the Compulsory Education Law, the establishment of these organisations was made obligatory.<sup>2</sup> A *Caisse* was accordingly set up in each of the twenty *arrondissements* of Paris. Attendance at school being now compulsory, and it being therefore no longer so necessary to provide incentives to attendance, the *Caisses*, though they still continued to grant prizes, turned their attention more and more to the physical needs of the children, boots, clothing, food, country holidays and, later, crèches, Savings Banks, skilled apprenticeship and medical treatment. The *Caisse* was a voluntary body, but was officially recognised by the municipality. The General Committee was composed of the Mayor, the members of the Municipal Council, and the school inspector for the district, together with from twenty to twenty-four persons elected by the subscribers.<sup>3</sup>

As in other towns, the early attempts at feeding poor school children were due to private initiative; meals were provided by the *Caisses des Ecoles* or other voluntary

<sup>1</sup> "The Free Feeding of School Children," a reprint of the reports by the Special Sanitary Commissioner of the *Lancet*, 2nd edition, 1907, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

associations or by philanthropic individuals. These attempts were unco-ordinated and inadequate to deal with the evil of underfeeding. In 1879 the Municipal Council made an enquiry into the whole question. As a result a scheme was drawn up to place the work on a more satisfactory and uniform basis under public control. The provision of meals was entrusted in each *arrondissement* to the *Caisses des Ecoles*, and a grant of 480,000 francs was voted by the Municipal Council to aid them in this work.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that it was seriously considered whether the meals should not be supplied free for all children attending the schools. The Council, however, came to the conclusion that, "in freeing the parents of all responsibility with regard to their children, and in accustoming them to evade their duties, they would be running the risk of weakening the family spirit, to the great detriment of the morality both of the children and of the parents."<sup>2</sup> It was, therefore, decided that free provision should be limited to necessitous children. At the same time it would be difficult to exclude children who were willing to pay for their meals, hence provision should be made for these too.

The voluntary subscriptions which had supported the work before 1880 continued in theory to be the chief resource of the new *Cantines Scolaires*. These voluntary subscriptions rapidly decreased, being either withdrawn altogether or diverted to the other objects of the *Caisses*. At the same time both the number of meals provided and the proportion of free meals increased no less markedly. In 1880, the first year in which meals

<sup>1</sup> "The Cantines Scolaires of Paris," by Sir Charles A. Elliott, in the *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1906, pp. 834-5.

<sup>2</sup> "Organisation des Cantines Scolaires à Paris," a manifold manuscript report issued by the Direction de l'Enseignement primaire, 3<sup>me</sup> bureau, 1912.



were provided under the new system, only 33 per cent. of the meals were supplied free (the remainder being paid for by the parents); in 1898 this proportion had nearly doubled, being 63 per cent. The municipal subsidy rose correspondingly, and in 1899 amounted to 1,017,000 francs. The Council took fright and appointed a Commission to consider the question, with the result that the grant was restricted to 1,000,000 francs.<sup>1</sup> This limit has been fairly strictly adhered to, for the grant amounts now to only 1,050,000 francs, though the proportion of free meals has continued slowly to increase.<sup>2</sup>

Each *Caisse* is allowed a free hand in the actual details of administration, hence the arrangements vary in the different *arrondissements*. The want of uniformity has obvious disadvantages, and a proposal was recently made that the system should be centralised, but this would have necessitated the appointment of a large and expensive staff, and it was felt desirable to leave the initiative and responsibility to voluntary workers.<sup>3</sup> Everywhere the meal is served on the school premises, a kitchen being established for each school or group of schools. The meal is cooked by the *cantinières*, and is sometimes provided by them at a fixed price per head; more often the *Caisse* prefers to purchase the materials itself, a more economical method, and one which ensures a better quality of food.<sup>4</sup> The dinner may consist of one, two or three courses. The food is plentiful and good, well-cooked and well-served, and the menu sufficiently varied. The meals are made as attractive as possible to encourage

<sup>1</sup> "The Cantines Scolaires of Paris," by Sir Charles Elliott, in the *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1906, pp. 835-6.

<sup>2</sup> According to the latest figures 70 per cent. of the children for whom meals are provided receive them free.

<sup>3</sup> "Organisation des Cantines Scolaires à Paris," report by Direction de l'Enseignement primaire, 3me bureau, 1912.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

the better-class parents to make use of them. The price charged varies from 1d. to 2d.; in almost all the *arrondissements* the charge appears to be below the cost price. No difference is made between the children who pay and those who are on the free list. The teachers do not assist in serving the food, as in England, but are always present to supervise the children, and, in some schools at any rate, they eat their dinner with them. At first the supervision was undertaken voluntarily, but since 1910 the teachers have received an extra remuneration of 1.50 francs a day for this duty.<sup>1</sup> This sharing in a common meal by all classes alike, together with the presence of the teacher, has had a marked influence on the children's manners. Besides the mid-day meal, which is given by all the *Caisses*, breakfasts of soup are sometimes supplied to the children who are receiving free dinners, while in some *arrondissements*, e.g., the eighteenth, a small meal is also given at four o'clock to these children if they remain at school for the "classe de garde."<sup>2</sup> A further extension has recently been made in the seventeenth *arrondissement*, where it was decided in 1912 to try the experiment of a "classe de garde" till eight o'clock in the evening, with a supper, for children of widows or widowers who were at work till late, or for other especially poor children, or children with bad homes, the object being both to secure them adequate nourishment and to remove them from the temptations of the streets. For this purpose the Municipal Council voted a sum of 10,000 francs.<sup>3</sup> Weakly children have

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> "Caisse des écoles du 18e arrondissement," Exercice de l'année 1911, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Proposition tendant à l'ouverture d'un crédit de 10,000 francs en vue de permettre à la Caisse des Ecoles du XVIIe arrondissement d'organiser, à titre d'essai, une classe de garde prolongée jusqu'à huit heures et une cantine du soir, déposée par M. Frédéric Brunet, conseiller municipal, Septembre 19, 1912.

codliver oil given to them in winter and syrup of iodide of iron or phosphate of lime in the summer.

The methods of enquiry vary in the different *arrondissements*. Usually the enquiries are made by a paid investigator, but the numbers of children on the free list are so large that the investigation is as a rule very superficial. The necessity of keeping secret the fact that a child is receiving the meals free also militates against any effective enquiry into the parents' circumstances. The meals are granted for a school year, hence it frequently happens that a child continues to receive them long after the need has passed away.<sup>1</sup> The enquiries are, as might be expected, the least satisfactory part of the Paris system. In granting the meals the *Caisses* usually take a generous view; it is held, for instance, that a man earning up to 30s. a week cannot adequately feed and clothe more than three children, and if his family is larger than this the *Caisses* are prepared to assist him; while widows' children are invariably fed if application is made.<sup>2</sup>

An interesting feature of the Paris system is the provision of clothes. The municipality insists that the children shall come to school properly clothed; it is ready to provide the requisite garments, but it insists that they shall be kept clean and tidy. Frequent inspections are made for this purpose. The result is a notable raising of the level of cleanliness and tidiness in the schools, both the parents and the children themselves learning to take a pride in their appearance.<sup>3</sup> So far, indeed, from the work of the *Caisses* having undermined parental responsibility, it would appear that the reverse

<sup>1</sup> "Organisation des Cantines Scolaires à Paris," report issued by Direction de l'Enseignement primaire, 3me bureau, 1912; "Necessitous Children in Paris and London," by George Rainey, in *School Hygiene*, November, 1912, Vol. III., p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198, 200.

is the case, the parents responding to the higher standard demanded of them.

What strikes one in comparing the Paris system with that obtaining in English towns is the thoroughness with which the problem is tackled in Paris and the widespread interest taken by the citizens generally in the work of the *Caisses*. No half measures content them. From the first the work has been educational, the primary object of the *Caisses* being to encourage school attendance rather than to relieve distress. The educational progress of the children, the improvement in their physique, the raising of the standard of manners and cleanliness, all show that the results have amply justified the expenditure.<sup>1</sup>

(ii) *Provision in other French Towns.*

Paris was not the first municipality in France to interest itself in the provision of school meals. The pioneer town in this respect seems to have been Angers, where as early as 1871 the Société de Fourneau des Ecoles Laïques was founded with the support of the municipality, to provide hot dinners, either free or at a cost of 10 centimes, during the winter.<sup>2</sup> Towards the close of the nineteenth century many municipalities

<sup>1</sup> For the above description, see, besides the references already quoted, Report of London School Board on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, Appendix IX., pp. 262-5; "The Cantines Scolaires of Paris," by Marcel Kleine, in *Report of Proceedings of the International Congress for the Welfare and Protection of Children*, 1906, pp. 65-82; "Feeding School Children: The Experience of France," in the *Manchester Guardian*, February 22, 1906; "Children's Care Committees in Paris," in the *Morning Post*, March 19, 1909; "School Canteens in Paris," by Miss M. M. Boldero, in the *School Child*, July, 1910; *School Feeding, its History and Practice at Home and Abroad*, by Louise Stevens Bryant, 1913, pp. 77-93; Conseil Municipal de Paris, Procès Verbal, June 25, 1909, December 31, 1909, March 23, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, pp. 93-94.

were providing meals, either directly or indirectly through voluntary organisations.

Thus at Havre, in 1898, the municipality was making a grant of £500 to a voluntary society; meals were provided for 10 centimes, or were given free in cases of poverty; about five-eighths of the children who attended paid for the meals.<sup>1</sup>

At Marseilles Cantines Scolaires were organised by the municipality in 1893. Prior to this date meals had been provided in some three or four schools, but only in a haphazard manner by voluntary agencies. By the bye-law of 1893 a committee of twenty-two was to be appointed by the Mayor, and presided over by him or his representative; this committee was to investigate the demands made for free meals. In 1905 about 8 per cent. of the children in the communal schools were dining at school, about half this number paying for the meal; in the infant schools the proportion fed was much greater, viz., 18 per cent., while only about one-sixth of the parents paid. As in Paris, no distinction was made between the paying and the non-paying children. Dinner tickets could be bought at all the police stations; if the parents wished to receive the meals free, they had to make application personally or by letter to the education department; if on investigation they proved to be unable to pay, the municipality provided them with tickets.<sup>2</sup>

At Nice also Cantines Scolaires were established by the municipality about 1896. Here the object was not so much to feed starving children as to provide a suitable meal for children who came such distances that they were unable to return home at mid-day. The municipality

<sup>1</sup> London School Board, Report on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> *Lancet* Reports, 1907, pp. 50-56.

built kitchens, provided all the necessary apparatus, and paid the salaries of the cooks. A penny was charged for a dinner of soup, the meal being given free to those who could not afford to pay. Any deficit was supplied by voluntary subscriptions. In the infant schools, on the other hand, the municipality assumed the entire responsibility, and a hot meal was provided for all the children without payment.<sup>1</sup>

By 1909 Canteines Scolaires of one kind or another had been very generally established. It appeared that at this date something like three-fifths were supported entirely by public funds, the remainder being so supported indirectly and partially. In many towns where regular canteines had not been instituted, the teachers or janitors served warm soup to the children at a nominal sum. In country districts or smaller towns, the children would bring the raw material for soup and the teacher would prepare it; the children would also bring their own bread, and sometimes wine and cake. Whether any organised provision was made or not, the great majority of the schools everywhere had a stove on which the children could warm any food they brought with them.<sup>2</sup>

#### (b) SWITZERLAND

Switzerland was one of the first countries in which provision for necessitous school children became the subject of national legislation. The question early attracted attention. The long distances which many of the children had to walk to school rendered the provision of a mid-day meal of the greatest importance, while clothing and especially boots were little less necessary. After 1890 the system of providing food and clothing was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>2</sup> *School Feeding* by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, pp. 80, 94-97.

greatly extended. The provision was everywhere made by voluntary societies, but assistance was given from the cantonal and communal funds. The cantonal contribution was derived chiefly from the alcohol monopoly profits and was devoted to this provision for the children's wants on the theory that their misery was in most cases the direct result of parental insobriety!<sup>1</sup> This method of administration by voluntary societies, subsidised but not controlled by the municipal authorities, proved most extravagant, and led to much abuse, while it aroused sectarian jealousies. The municipalities began, consequently, to take over the direct management of the school meals.<sup>2</sup> In 1903 the Federal Government issued an order making it *obligatory* for cantons to supply food and clothing to necessitous children in the public elementary schools. Three years later it authorised the use of state funds for this purpose, on the understanding that in no case should the cantonal or city support be lessened because of this federal support.<sup>3</sup>

### (c) ITALY

As in other countries, the early attempts at school feeding in Italy were made by voluntary agencies. In many towns, towards the close of the nineteenth century, Committees of Assistance and Benevolent Funds were instituted to assist poor pupils in the elementary schools, chiefly in the matter of books and clothing, but in several communes of Lombardy and Romagna meals were also given. A small grant, which in 1897 was raised to 120,000 francs (£4,800), was made by the Department of Public Instruction to the school authorities

<sup>1</sup> Report of London School Board on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, pp. 271-2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bitter Cry of the Children*, by John Spargo, 1906, p. 277.

<sup>3</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, p. 133.

in the large cities, and especially Rome, who provided a mid-day meal for their children.<sup>1</sup>

The first town in which the municipality undertook the provision of meals was San Remo, in 1896. This policy was inaugurated by the Socialist Council. It was temporarily abandoned in 1898, when a Conservative Council was appointed who preferred the subsidising of voluntary agencies to direct municipal action, but was re-introduced on the return of the Socialists to power some four years later.<sup>2</sup>

In Milan an agitation for the provision of meals was set on foot in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The municipal authority declined to undertake the work themselves, but advocated the formation of charitable committees to raise subscriptions for the purpose, offering to supplement these voluntary funds with a municipal subvention. This grant amounted in 1897 to about £400.<sup>3</sup> It was soon found that this system did not work satisfactorily, and the municipality was obliged, though somewhat reluctantly, to assume the responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

But it is in the small rural town of Vercelli that we find the most remarkable experiment.<sup>5</sup> Here for some years a charitable committee had been providing meals for children who lived too far from school to go home at mid-day, and the municipality had granted a small subsidy, but it was felt that this provision was entirely inadequate. In 1900 it was decided to provide a meal for all the children attending the elementary schools.

<sup>1</sup> Report of London School Board on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Lancet Reports*, 1907, pp. 31, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of London School Board, May 26, 1898, Vol. 48, p. 1810.

<sup>4</sup> *Lancet Reports*, 1907, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> For the following account, see *Lancet Reports*, pp. 24-30. It is interesting to note that this scheme for making universal provision was introduced by the Conservative party.



The object was not the relief of distress but education in its fullest sense, as distinct from mere instruction. It was argued that the mid-day recess furnished an opportunity for moral education which could not be imparted in the class-room. The teachers would be brought into more intimate relation with the children, while the joining of richer and poorer alike in the common meal and in recreation afterwards would instil sentiments of brotherhood. The meal was to be free to all and attendance compulsory, for rich and poor were to be treated exactly alike. With the same object of preventing class distinctions, clothes were supplied for the poorer children, the municipality providing the material which was worked into garments by the sewing classes. The teachers were to have the same food, though they were allowed a double quantity, and were to eat it with the children. For this extra duty of supervising both the meals and recreation they only received an additional £2 a year. Since the moral rather than the physical welfare of the child was the primary consideration, too little attention was paid to the actual food that was given. The parents, it was argued, could in the great majority of cases amply feed their children at home, hence all that was needed was to supply sufficient food to compensate for the waste of energy during the two and a half hours of morning school. A cold meal of bread and sausage or cheese was given. This did not satisfy the more prosperous children, who would have preferred to pay for a hot meal, and some 10 per cent. of the children, chiefly the richer ones, obtained a medical certificate exempting them from attendance. Nor was the meal sufficient for the poorest children who were suffering from lack of food. To provide a really adequate meal free for all would have been too expensive an undertaking. Accordingly, after some six years, the general free pro-

vision was abandoned. Instead, hot soup was provided, which was given free to the poorest children, any others who wished being allowed to receive it on payment of 1.50 lire a month.<sup>1</sup>

The "School Restaurant" seems to have been established in Italy to a greater extent than in any other country. A very large proportion of the children attend, and a great number of these pay for the meals. In 1908-9 it was found that in forty-three cities the average attendance amounted to 37 per cent. of the total school population; while in several towns the attendance rose to over 70 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

#### (d) GERMANY

In Germany little attention appears to have been paid to the question of feeding school children, apart from their parents, till the closing years of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In some of the large towns, at any rate, the arrangements that were made were quite inadequate. In Berlin, for instance, there was in 1890 no society whose chief object was the provision of school meals. A society which provided food for the poor generally had a branch which devoted special attention to the needs of school children, and gave a small sum, generally only 15s. or 20s. a year, to the committee of each parish school, to be used at the headmaster's discretion. Generally milk and bread were given in the headmaster's house.<sup>4</sup> About 1890 the subject began to attract more attention, especially in connection with the vacation colonies for school children; it was found that the children who were sent to these colonies, on returning to their homes, lost the benefit they

<sup>1</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, p. 141; *Il Patronato Scolastico* Umberto 1° in Vercelli e la sua Opera al 31 Dicembre, 1912, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> "Prize Essays on Feeding School Children," 1890, pp. 65, 212-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

had gained, owing to lack of food. On an attempt being made to continue the work of the colonies by feeding some of the children, it was found that thousands of others were also underfed.<sup>1</sup> In 1897 a Bill was introduced in the Reichstag by the Social Democrats to make provision for school meals in the cities. The Bill was defeated on the ground that it would increase the migration to the cities from the rural districts.<sup>2</sup> Some ten years later the agitation for national legislation was renewed, as a result of the discovery that from 44 to 46 per cent. of the conscripts for the Imperial Army were rejected on account of physical unfitness.<sup>3</sup>

In 1909 it was found that out of 189 cities from which information was obtained, in 78 meals were being provided by voluntary societies, without any subsidy from, or control by, the municipal authorities, though these latter usually co-operated in the supervision and service, and often supplied rooms, gas and cooking free; in 68 cities, meals were provided by voluntary organisations, but the city governments subsidised, and usually exercised some control over, their work; while in 43 cities the provision of meals was undertaken entirely by the municipality.<sup>4</sup>

(e) AUSTRIA

In Austria school meals are provided in most of the large towns.

In Vienna the Central Association for feeding necessitous school children was founded in 1887, with the help and approval of the municipality, the Mayor acting as President and the Municipal Council being represented on its Administrative Council. Meals were given from November to April, occasionally at the schools, but more often

<sup>1</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, pp. 17-18, 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 106.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-5.

in restaurants. All the meals were supplied free. The children were selected by the School Managers and the headmaster, and enquiry was made by Local Committees with the help of voluntary workers. The teachers supervised the meals.<sup>1</sup> In 1888-9, the Municipal Council made a grant to this society towards the provision of food ;<sup>2</sup> by 1896 this municipal subsidy amounted to 50,000 frs. (£2,000), while 52,500 frs. were granted for the supply of clothing.<sup>3</sup> In 1906 the food subsidy had risen to £3,350.<sup>4</sup> The provision made was, however, inadequate. Meals were only given during the winter, and were not obtained by all the children who needed them. It was felt that the city ought to assume direct control. In 1909 kitchens and dining-rooms were built in four new public schools.<sup>5</sup>

#### (f) BELGIUM

In most of the Belgian towns in the last decade of the nineteenth century voluntary organisations were to be found whose object was to provide food and clothing for poor school children. This provision was made to enable them to attend school instead of begging in the streets, since education was not compulsory.<sup>6</sup> In Brussels the chief society was "Le Progrès" Club, which in 1888 commenced the provision of soup dinners in the schools. The Town Council assisted by providing tables and undertaking the carriage of the food to the different centres, and in 1891 by granting a subsidy of 5,000 frs. An application

<sup>1</sup> "Prize Essays on Feeding School Children," 1890, pp. 66-70, 181-7, 197-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 198.

<sup>3</sup> London School Board, Report on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, pp. 258, 260-261.

<sup>4</sup> *Feeding of School Children in Continental and American Cities*, 1906, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, p. 143.

<sup>6</sup> London School Board, Report on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, p. 256.

was very soon made for an increase of this subsidy, whereupon the municipality undertook a detailed enquiry into the whole question of the food, clothing, lodging, cleanliness and health of the children in the communal schools. It was found as a result that 16.89 per cent. were badly shod, 25.04 per cent. badly clothed, and 25.55 per cent. insufficiently fed.<sup>1</sup> The work of medical inspection and treatment was very early undertaken by the local authority. At the date of this report (1894), a doctor and dentist were attached to each school; frequent inspections were made by the doctor, and preventive medicine, *e.g.* codliver oil, was provided from public funds.<sup>2</sup> The provision of meals continued to be undertaken by voluntary organisations, aided by a municipal subsidy. In 1903-04, this subsidy amounted to 10,000 frs. for the communal schools, and 5,000 frs. for the clerical schools. In addition large quantities of clothing were supplied from public funds.<sup>3</sup>

At Liège, as early as 1883, the municipality organised the provision of soup for all children in the kindergartens who wished to receive it.<sup>4</sup> The dinner was only given on condition that the children were clean and tidy. Each child was expected to have clean linen twice a week and also to have a pocket handkerchief. A teacher was present to supervise the children, and share the meal with them. Each child brought a basket of bread and fruit to supplement the food provided, and at the end any bread that remained was packed in the baskets by the children, to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255; Board of Education, Reports on Educational Subjects, Vol. II., 1898, p. 682.

<sup>2</sup> London School Board, Report on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, p. 256.

<sup>3</sup> *Lancet* Reports, 1907, pp. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> *Feeding of School Children in Continental and American Cities*, 1906, p. 2; London School Board, Report on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, pp. 259, 260-1.

prevent waste and to inculcate habits of thrift.<sup>1</sup> The whole cost was borne out of municipal funds. In 1901 a voluntary committee was formed for providing soup in the communal primary schools. This committee placed at the disposal of the municipality a sum of 10,000 frs., in order that general provision might be made for the first year's scholars in the primary schools, on the same lines as in the kindergartens. In other classes in the primary schools soup was given only to necessitous children, or to those whose parents were at work all day; this provision was at first limited to three months during the winter, but in 1905 the municipality voted a grant of 7,000 frs. in order that it might be extended to six months.<sup>2</sup>

#### (g) HOLLAND

Holland was the first country to enact national legislation for the provision of school meals. The law of 1900 enforcing compulsory education authorised municipal authorities to provide food and clothing for all school children, whether in public or private schools, who, owing to lack of these necessities, were unable to attend school regularly. This provision might be undertaken directly by the municipality, or by means of subsidies to voluntary organisations.<sup>3</sup>

#### (h) DENMARK

In some of the cities of Denmark meals were provided by voluntary agencies in the 'seventies. In 1902 a law was passed allowing municipal authorities to subsidise these organisations. This system, however, proved

<sup>1</sup> "Prize Essays on Feeding School Children," 1890, pp. 204-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Feeding of School Children in Continental and American Cities*, 1906, pp. 2, 4, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, p. 130.

unsatisfactory and, in 1907, a campaign was set on foot for compulsory national legislation.<sup>1</sup>

In Copenhagen the municipality from 1902 made a grant of 25,000 kr. (about £1,400) to the "Society for Providing Meals to Free School Children," the voluntary contributions to which were rapidly diminishing. This society, though a voluntary organisation, was directly connected with the municipality, its Executive Board consisting of the seven municipal school inspectors and four private gentlemen, while the municipal school director was *ex officio* president. More than half the total expenditure was met out of the municipal subsidy, the balance being made up by voluntary contributions. Dinners were given three days a week to all the children in the free schools who wished to attend. No charge was made and no question raised as to the economic circumstances of the parents. About 33 per cent. of the total number of free school children availed themselves of this provision.<sup>2</sup>

#### (i) NORWAY

Christiania was the first town in Norway to make municipal provision for underfed school children. The system was started in 1897. A proposal was made to distribute food free to all elementary school children, but this was, at the time, rejected. In the winter of 1897-8, applications were made on behalf of 25.92 per cent. of the pupils in the school, the great majority of the meals being given free.<sup>3</sup> The children made such marked progress as a result of this experiment that the system

<sup>1</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> *The Feeding of School Children in Continental and American Cities*, 1906, pp. 3, 5, 7.

<sup>3</sup> London School Board, Report on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, p. 268; *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, p. 145.

was extended and in Christiania and several other towns a good dinner was provided by the school authorities for all school children who cared to attend, the entire cost of the system being met by taxation.<sup>1</sup> It was soon found that the advantages of this free provision outweighed the expense. At Trondhjem, when the proposal was first made by the Socialists, it was bitterly opposed, but by 1906 the system was unanimously supported by all sections.<sup>2</sup>

### (7) SWEDEN

In many towns in Sweden schemes for feeding poor school children were started in the 'eighties, these voluntary schemes being later subsidised by the local authorities.<sup>3</sup>

In Stockholm several voluntary organisations were formed for supplying meals, the provision being usually limited to necessitous children. In order to preserve the self-respect of the children and parents, some of these societies adopted the plan of allowing the children to contribute to the expense of the dinner by performing some manual work, the making of baskets (which were sold), the mending of clothes, the sweeping out of the rooms, etc.<sup>4</sup> Towards the close of the nineteenth century the School Boards of the several parishes resolved to build kitchens at the schools. The kitchens generally contained several fireplaces, at each of which dinners for a certain number of children were prepared by the elder girls.<sup>5</sup> Each child only received a dinner three times a week.

<sup>1</sup> *The Bitter Cry of the Children*, by John Spargo, 1906, pp. 114-115, 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, pp. 143-4.

<sup>4</sup> "Prize Essays on Feeding School Children," 1890, pp. 71-75.

<sup>5</sup> London School Board, Report on Underfed Children attending School, 1899, pp. 270-271.



At Jönköping the free distribution of meals dates from 1887. The funds, which were derived from voluntary contributions and proceeds of concerts, were administered by the Board School Inspector, and the distribution of the food was supervised by the School Board. The children were usually sent for dinner to the houses of private ladies who undertook the catering.<sup>1</sup> The poorest children were fed twice a week, those who were rather less poor only once.

At Gothenburg, besides the provision made by voluntary agencies, the Board of Education distributed bread to certain children who were selected by the School Board.<sup>2</sup>

#### (k) UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In America<sup>3</sup> the movement for the feeding of school children is of comparatively recent date. It is true that in the numerous Day Industrial Schools which were instituted in the nineteenth century by voluntary organisations, *e.g.*, by the Children's Aid Society, meals were always given,<sup>4</sup> but it was not till 1904, when Mr. Robert Hunter in his "Poverty" stated that probably 60,000 or 70,000 children in New York City often arrived at school hungry and unfitted to do their school work well,<sup>5</sup> that public attention was seriously directed to the question of under-feeding among school children.

In New York in 1908 a School Lunch Committee of physicians and social workers was formed with the object of ascertaining if a three cent lunch could be made self-supporting. This idea of making the meals self-supporting seems to be characteristic of the provision made in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

*Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> See for a full description of the provision made in America, *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> "Prize Essays on Feeding School Children," 1890, pp. 225-35.

<sup>4</sup> *Poverty*, by Robert Hunter, 1904, p. 216.

most of the American cities. Two schools were at first chosen, and the experiment proved so successful that two years later the Board of Education gave permission for lunches to be supplied in other schools. The Board provided rooms, equipment and gas; the cost of the food and service had to be met by the sale of tickets. The meals are served sometimes in the basement in the schools, and there does not appear to be always adequate accommodation. The meal itself is well cooked and served, the elder children helping the staff. A physician draws up the dietaries. These include one main dish such as soup, stew, rice pudding, etc., costing the child about four cents. There are besides "extras," such as dessert, cakes or other delicacies, which may be bought for one cent, but only by children who have had the main dish. The meals are not quite self-supporting, as a small number are given free.<sup>1</sup>

In Philadelphia the Starr Center Association undertook school feeding in some schools over fifteen years ago, but it is now managed by the Home and School League. Several of the schools provide a meal, some at 10.30 a.m., others a fuller meal at midday. The cost is one cent for lunch and three to five cents for dinner. There is one hot dish of soup or rice pudding, etc., and the children may spend another cent on the "extra" dainty. The meals are self-supporting. The teachers co-operate enthusiastically, and sometimes eat with the children. The food is served on japanned trays in enamel bowls and a paper napkin is provided. The washing up is done by the children under supervision, and everything is carefully sterilised. Both the superintendent, who is responsible for planning the meals and purchasing the food materials, and the home visitor are trained dietists.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *School Feeding*, by Louise S. Bryant, 1913, pp. 147-50.

*Ibid.*, pp. 151-164.

In Boston the Hygiene Committee of the Home and School Association began to organise school dinners in 1909, at a school with a kitchen attached. By 1911 meals were being supplied at twenty-two schools. Equipment was given in the first place, and the meals are now self-supporting. In schools where there is a kitchen, the cooking classes prepare and serve the meals; here one cent amply covers the cost of the food. In other schools outside help is hired, and an extra cent per meal ticket meets this expense.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the rest of the States the system is gaining ground. By 1912 some thirty cities had organised the provision of school meals, while in at least twenty others the question was under consideration. Everywhere this provision was made by voluntary organisations.<sup>2</sup> Public funds could not be utilised, but there was growing anxiety that the question should be made a national concern. The nearest approach to legislative action was taken by Massachusetts, where in 1912 the Committee on Education of the Lower House reported favourably a Bill to allow School Boards to spend part of the school funds on the provision of meals.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 182-3.

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